



THE AGRARIAN ECONOMY OF THE CARNATIC (1750 - 1801)

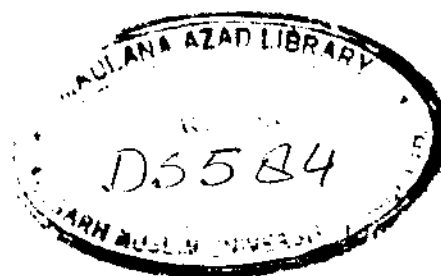
**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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80 M. PHIL. 10
ENROLMENT NO. Q 1911**

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**CENTRE OF ADVANCED STUDY IN HISTORY
ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY
ALIGARH, INDIA**

1983



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THIS is to certify that the work of
Ms. Parvathi Menon is original and has been
done under my supervision. I recommend her
dissertation for the award of the M.Phil degree.

26 October 1983


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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am most grateful to Professor Irfan Habib for his guidance and encouragement in the writing of this dissertation.

Most of the material used here was collected at the Tamilnadu Archives and I would like to thank the Librarian and the research staff for their cooperation. The Librarian and Staff of the Library of the Department of History, A.I.U. were also very helpful; my thanks also to Mr. Faiz Habib for drawing the map.

Three typists worked on this dissertation, Mr. Zahoor Ahmad Khan, Mr. Mohd. Zubair and Mr. Mohd. Mujeeb Noori, and I am extremely grateful to all of them, particularly the latter two who completed my chapters and tables at very short notice.

For the tables and statistical parts of the dissertation, I relied on the expertise of Dr. Shireen Moosvi and I would like to thank her very much for having always been so ready with her help and time. Finally, my thanks to my friends, too numerous to mention here, who assisted me at every stage of my work.

Parvathi Menon
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C O N T E N T S

	<u>PAGE NO.</u>
Introduction	1 - 5
I. The Region: The Carnatic - The Evolution of its Political Boundaries.	7 - 24
II. Agricultural Production	25 - 51
III. The Village Community and Peasant Status.	52 - 100
IV. The Structure of Superior Rights	103 - 174
V. The Land Revenue	175 - 187
VI. The Carnatic Debts and the Financial Crisis.	191 - 193
Conclusion	195 - 194

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. MRO : Madras Record Office
2. IESHR : Indian Economic and Social History Review
3. CIS : Contributions to Indian Sociology
4. MJGA : Madras Journal of the Geographical Association
5. SEHR : Scandinavian Economic History Review
6. SSCRVTD : Studies in Socio-cultural Change in Rural Villages in Trichirapalli District
7. PPICSTS : Proceedings of the First Conference Seminar of Tamil Studies



INTRODUCTION

Most studies of pre-colonial south India have relied mainly on the evidence of inscriptions which are found in some abundance particularly for the medieval period. The region has been generally considered to have been a distinct one, historically. Partially, of course this is true; its physical configuration (the Deccan block to its north) separates it from the northern plains, which may be one of the reasons why it never formed a stable part of the empires which rose and lasted for such considerable period in the north. But some adherents of this viewpoint go further and would stress the consistent isolation of south Indian society, and in its more extreme version of the same viewpoint there is stress on its uniqueness, and superiority.

Such interpretations of history, are belied by the actual historical evidence. What perhaps distinguishes the polity and economy of pre-colonial south India is the fact of its responsiveness to and assimilation of the various waves of influence that came from outside. By the 17th and 18th centuries the many cross-currents of outside influence, be it the Vijayanagara, the Bijapuris, the Mughal or the Maratha merge with the indigenous system and it no longer becomes possible to say where one ends and the other begins. For example, take the term 'miras', a word that frequently

occurs in our evidence to denote a particular superior right tenure. The word is clearly of Persian origin and must have come from outside (possibly from Bijapur, as the mirasdar was a superior right holder in medieval Maharashtra as well); but we see here how a foreign term adapted itself easily with an institution of indigenous origin (as proved by the original Tamil synonym for miras, Kani-atchi). Another illustration of this would be the co-existence of the currency systems of different regions - the early Chola, Vijayanagara, the Maratha and the Mughal. Possibly more difficult to distinguish would be the influence of trade and the spread of commodity production. By the 18th century all evidence points to the important role commodity production played within the village, with its logical extension in the rural and urban markets; but at what point of time, where and how commodity production itself arose is a question that would require separate investigation.

The 18th century is deserving of attention for another reason as well. It is during this time that we see the effects of colonial rule on a predominantly agrarian society. It was during the latter half of the 18th century that a transformation of many of the traditional features of the agrarian economy was forged under the relentless pressure of colonialism.

While there was a

broad uniformity all over the country in the way in which colonialism operated (viz. in the Presidencies of Bombay, Bengal, Madras and the native states), the methods they used in each area differed, and the change-over from a pre-modern, or medieval economy into a colonial one was quite specific to each region.

By the middle of the 18th century most of the southern districts were in a situation which seemed ideally ripe for colonial conquest. No native power was strong enough to expand or consolidate its rule. In a constantly shifting political scenario, the impermanency of political power generated a kind of self-destructive misrule in the various principalities. Mysore, under Haider Ali and Tippu Sultan, stands out as a distinct exception to the general economic and political anarchy, and was even able to regenerate its economy for time; but it too had to finally succumb in the face of the onslaught of an advanced colonial power.

The earliest territorial acquisition of the East India Company - from a revenue point of view - was of the territory around Madras, known as the Jaghire (having been originally granted by the Nawab of the Carnatic as a Jaghire to the English). The revenue assigned was intended as a contribution towards the expenses of wars undertaken by the Company in 'aid' of the Nawab. At first the direct administration was

not in the hands of the Company, the revenues being collected by the Nawab himself, but in 1780, the Company took over direct administration of the district. They let it out in fourteen large farms on leases of nine years at increasing rents. The Company kept pressing the 'renters' for advances which they could not fulfil. By 1788, they had repeatedly failed, and their 'estates' were sequestered. This happened in all the other districts as well. Due to the inability of the Nawab to fulfil the Company's demands they were brought under direct Company management.

In 1781, the Nawab of Arcot handed over to the Company the management and control of the whole of the revenues of the Carnatic provinces on condition that he be allowed 1/6 of the revenues for his personal use. In Tirunelveli, the opposition to the collection of revenues by the Company forced them to surrender the assignment to the Nawab in 1785. In 1780 the revenue administration was once again taken over by the Company who established a Board of Assigned Revenue for the purpose. The Company's administration in Tirunelveli brought the Poligars (or the local hereditary military chieftains) into open confrontation with them.

If the Nawab's administration was oppressive, the Company's rule was even more so. The administrative 'reforms' that the Company tried to make in the Carnatic should be

seen in the background of the growth of tax-farming and the Nawab's debts. During the period under review, this phenomenon (the serving up of practically the whole of the Carnatic to private money lenders of the Nawab) resulted in a massive depletion of wealth in the country. The history of the agrarian economy of this period, is in fact a study of the impact of the financial crisis wrought by the debts.

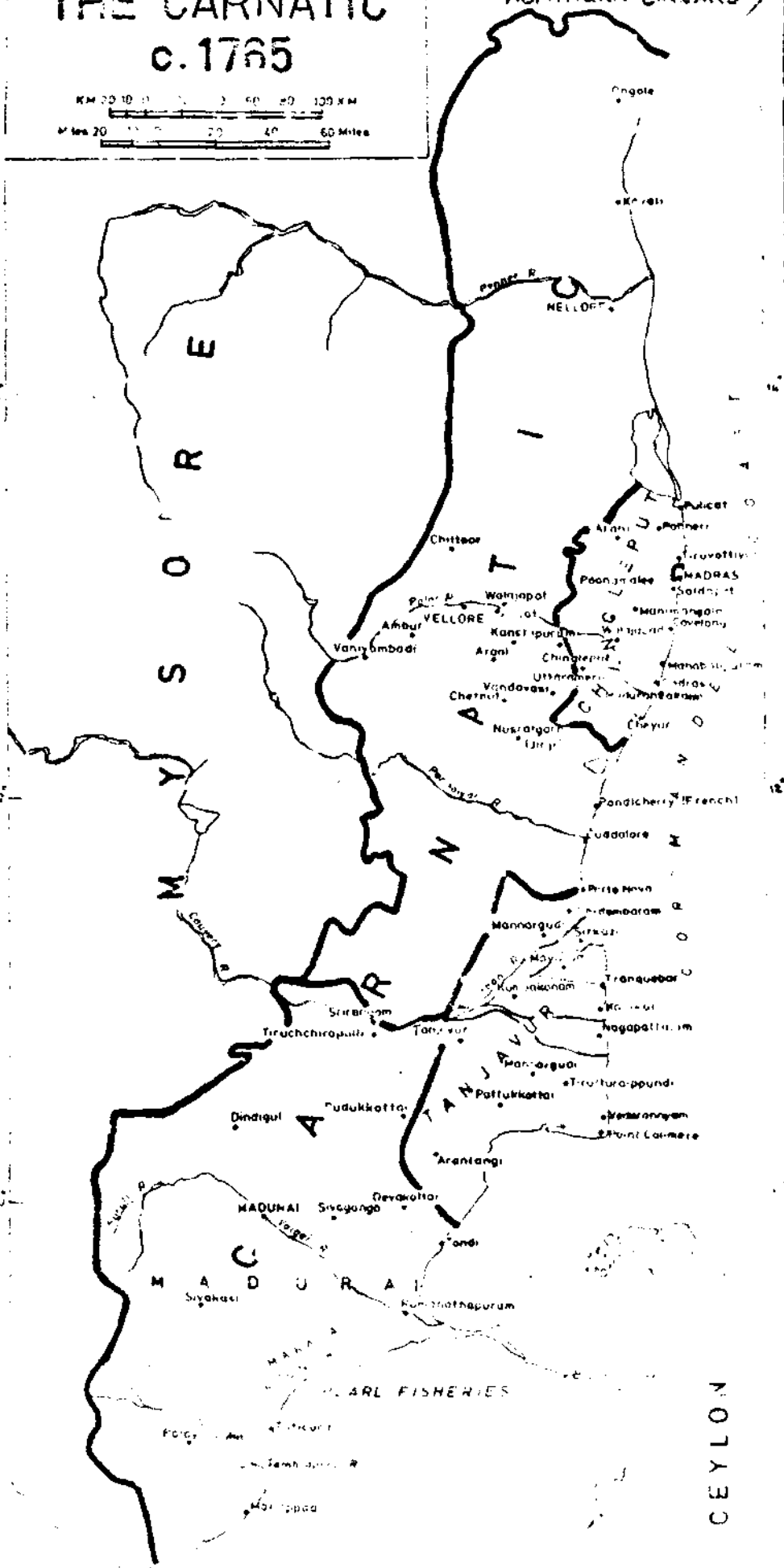
In the following chapters I have tried to deal with these two salient features of the history of the Carnatic. Most of the chapters are devoted to an elucidation of the various aspects of the pre-modern agrarian society, notably the position and role of various agrarian classes, the part played by the village system as a unit of production organisation, and the methods of revenue assessment and collection. The last chapter deals with the mechanics of colonial exploitation and the Arcot debts as a part of that process.

The wealth of information on the 18th century that the Madras Archives possesses and on which this dissertation is largely based, is perhaps justification enough for the topic chosen. The reports, surveys, and other observations made by British officials contains a great deal of information on both the old society with which they first came into contact as well as on the radical transformation that it underwent under their rule.

THE CARNATIC c. 1765

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NORTHERN CIRCARS



CHAPTER - I

THE REGION THE CARNATIC - EVOLUTION OF ITS POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

The 'Carnatic' we are concerned with here is that of the latter half of the 18th century; i.e., the dominions and dependencies of the Nawabs of Arcot. It may be instructive, in this context to outline in brief the changing political boundaries of this area in order to define with some precision the territory or region which we are studying.

The decline of the Vijayanagara Empire from the latter half of the 16th century marks an important phase in the political and administrative history of the South. As the Raya of Vijayanagar became feebler and feebler, local chieftains began to assert and extend their authority, continuously struggling amongst themselves. Henceforward, no single power was able to establish its effective authority over the whole of South India until the British brought the region under¹ their control by the end of the 18th century.

1. See R. Sewell, Sketch of the Dynasties of South India, Indian Reprint, Delhi 1975, pp. 2-3.

The heartland of the Vijaynagar Kingdom fell into the hands of the Sultanates of Bijapur and Golconda, by about the middle of the 17th century. Their conquests were divided by an imaginary line slanting from Vellore, to Sadras on the coast, the river Palar more²/_{or}less defining the boundary. The Haidarabadi-Carnatic (the part of the Carnatic conquered by Golconda and controlled from Haidarabad) comprised two distinct geographical-political zones: A balaghat (above the ghats) portion, and a payinghat (below the Ghats) portion. The balaghat portion comprised the five sarkars of Sidhout, Gandikotta, Gooty, Gurrunkonda and Dumbum. The payinghat portion extended along the coast from Guntur to South Arcot. This formed later, the nucleus of the Mughal faudari of Arcot. The Carnatic-i-Bijapuri (the parts of the Carnatic conquered by Bijapur) mostly lay in balaghat territory, largely comprising the settled upland sarkar of Sira and the territory of the Nayaka of Mysore, once a Viceroy of the Vijaynagara Emperors. The payinghat portion which included Vellore, Jinji and parts of Tanjore, belonged to Bijapur in theory, but the conquests had not been consolidated and unsubdued poligars and petty local chieftains held away. In 1677-78, Chivaji

2. Burhan Ibn Hasan, Tuzuk-i-Kalaishi, Part I, tr., J. Muhammad Hussain Nainar, Sources of the History of the Nawabs of the Carnatic, Madras 1934, pp. 57-58.

3. Ibid., FN, pp. 57-58.

Also see JN Sarkar, A History of Aurangzeb, Vol. V, Calcutta 1924, pp. 50-51.

4. Ibid., Vol. V, p. 46

seized the Bijapuri Payinghat territories from the Palar to the Coleroon river and established a Maratha capital at Jinji. After the annexation of Bijapur and Golconda by Aurangzeb and the invasion of the South by Mughal armies, the conquests of Shivaji were annexed to the Mughal suba of Haidarabad (erst-⁵ while Golconda) and became part of the faujdari of Arcot. The Mughals, realising that they would not be able to effectively administer all the districts of the Southern peninsula, particularly the far flung one's like Madura and Ramnad, were satisfied with the recognition of their nominal overlordship, and accepted tribute from the rulers already there.

The only regimes which maintained a relative degree of stability during these centuries of political turmoil were those under the nayaks of Tanjore and Madura, former viceroys of the Vijaynagar emperors.

The Tanjore nayak principality in 1509 included the modern districts of North and South Arcot, Chinglepet, Mananathapuram and part of Thanjavur. As the Bijapuri sultanate

5. Burhan, Tuzuk-i-Walaishi, op.cit., p. 58.
Also see L. Place, Report on the Jaghire, 1799, Board of Revenue (Misc.) Proceedings, Vol. 48, para 160.

6. See V. Vridhagirisai, The Nayaks of Tanjore, Annamalai-nagar, 1942, p. 17.

expanded southwards, the rule of the nayaks came to an end in 1674. It was assigned to a son of the famous Shahji, who was a Maratha commander of Bijapur. Subsequently, it accepted the tutelage of the Mughals and then the Nizamul Mulk Asaf Jah. Out of its latter connection it paid tribute to the Faujdar (Nawab) of Arcot. In 1771 it was invaded and annexed by the Nawab to his possessions, but restored by the company Government. In 1799 Wellesley annexed this principality to the Company's dominion.

The Kingdom of Madura remained under the rule of its ⁷Nayaks till 1736. Later the whole country splintered up into small chieftainies under petty rulers and poligars, all of them accepting in the suzerainty of the Nawab of Arcot and paying him tribute. This was the region in which, under the company administration, the Poligar uprisings broke out in the late 18th Century.

By the second half of the 18th Century the boundaries of the Carnatic more or less stabilised. It extended from 8th-16th degree north latitude, the northern boundary commencing at the southern limit of the Sarkar Cuntoor defined by

7. Rev. R. Caldwell, Political and General History of the District of Tinnevely, Madras 1881, pp. 60-61.

the small river Gundegana. It stretched south to Cape Comorin, a distance of about 560 miles. For a clearer picture, this region can be said to have embraced all the present day Tamil districts, with the exception of Coimbatore and Salem and with the inclusion of Nellore to its north.⁸ (See Map).

A Geographical Outline of the Carnatic Region:

The Southern Peninsula block has an exceedingly complex physical configuration and can be divided into distinct geographical sub-regions. This fact of geography would perhaps answer the question why the large empires which arose in the northern plains could never succeed in subjugating controlling the southern peninsular territories.

We have adopted here the classification made by Spate and Learmonth,⁹ of the eastern littoral of Tamilnadu (the region of our concern)¹⁰ into six geographical sub-regions.

8. Burhan Ibn Hasan, Tuzuk-i-Walihan, Part V, op.cit., p.54; See also, B. Heyne, Treats Historical and Statistical on India, with Journals of Several Tours Through Various Parts of the Peninsula, London 1814, p. 1; also, A. Hamilton, Description of Hindustan and the Adjacent Countries, Vol.II, p. 339.

9. Spate and Learmonth, India and Pakistan - A Regional Study Britain, 1967, p.739.

10. More recently, Stein has defined this region as a "macro-region"; a "nodal" region; and a "supra-cultural" zone.
(Contd. on next page.....)

This area consists of the great quadrant covering a little over 50,000 square miles lying between the sea and the Deccan plateau. These subdivisions include:-

1. The Coromandel coastal plain (the Madras hinter land)
2. The Tamilnadu hills
3. The Pannaiyar/ Palar trough
4. Kongunad (Coimbatore plateau and Palghat)
5. The Cauvery delta (part of Trichnopoly and Tanjavur) and
6. The dry South-east, further subdivided into:-
 - i. The upper Vaigai basin.
 - ii. The Madurai Ramanathapuram tank Country.
 - iii. The Tirunelveli black soil plain and
 - iv. The Tambaraparain basin. ¹¹ Of these we are not concerned with 3 and 4 as these did not form part of the 'Carnatic' of our definition.

He maintains that the nodal attraction of the great basin of the Kaveri (like its counter part the Ganga in the north) exerted in a very profound way its influence on the macro-regions historical development, so much so that all development in intermediate or outlying regions could in fact only have been extensions of this "civilisational core"; a somewhat tenuous argument. See the section entitled 'South-India, some general considerations' written by Stein in the Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol. I, C.1200-C.1700, ed. Tapan Raychauduri and Irfan Habib, Cambridge, 1982, pp. 14-23.

11. Spate and Learmonth, Vol. op.cit., p. 739.

Nellore is seen as transitional to the Coromandal plain, one feature in which this is reflected being the increasing importance of tank irrigation as one comes south. In the 18th Century, Nellore formed the northernmost district of the Nawab's territory. Nellore is mostly infertile country with its stony plains largely covered with scrub. The coast is fringed by a belt of alluvium upto 14 miles wide, with large tracts of jungle interspersed with coconut plains and palmyra. The inland country is more hilly although few hills have an elevation of more than 400 ft. The chief river of the region is the Pennair. Due to these reasons agriculture was severely limited. According to the Agricultural Statistics of 1894-95, Cholan was the main crop, accounting for 29-43 per cent of the total cropped area under food grains, followed by rice, accounting for 25 per cent.¹²

The Coromandel Coastal Plain

This has been historically, a densely populated region¹³ and one in which settled agriculture developed from a very early period. Of notable importance to the courses of historical development of this area was the influence of the

12. Agricultural Statistics of India 1894-95, Calcutta, p. 16-24

13. Under the Chola Kings the Coromandel plain was partitioned into three large territories called mandalam. In the extreme north was Tondamandalam; south of it was the territory called Naduvil Nadu; and further south, in the Kaveri basin, lay Cholanmandalam.

sea: maritime trade was conducted from the ports along the Bay of Bengal and references to trade and trading entrepôts can be traced to the early centuries of the Christian era.¹⁴

According to Spate's classification, the Coromandel coastal plain embraces the districts of Chingleput and South Arcot; the Kaveri basin being treated as a separate category.¹⁵ The whole region is fairly low-lying, 50-60 miles wide. Spate writes of the evidence of the submergence of the coast as is clear from the composition of the soils. The inland region of this belt contain mountains of seinitic their fragments, washed by torrents into the sea constitutes the sand of the coast.¹⁶ These formed part of the "naked, brown, dusty plains with nothing to relieve the eye except a ridge of abrupt detached hills towards the south" on the outskirts of the city of Madras, which Buchanan wrote about in the summer of 1801 when he passed through this region.¹⁷

14. K.A.N. Sastri, A History of South India, Madras, 1976, pp. 331-337; see also, N. Subramanian, Sangam Polity, 1966, pp. 235-244.

15. Apart from their widely differing physical features irrigation practices in the two regions were also different; tank irrigation predominated in the former area and canal irrigation in the Kaveri basin.

16. Spate and Learmonth, op.cit., pp. 742-43.

17. F. Buchanan, Journey Through Mysore, Malabar and Canara, Vol. I, London, 1807, p. 2.

In the late 18th century, the soil between Vellore and Madras was nearly as poor as that of the coast except that it had no saline impregnation.¹⁸ Where facilities for irrigation existed the soil was more fertile. The largely clayey soil around Kancipuram was rendered fertile by the water from the branches of the Palar. The high region, around the neighbourhood of Arcot was less fertile than the surrounding villages, the finer particles of soil being washed away by the rains.

The gneissic fringe of the region has generally red sandy soils, with black clays and loams in wetter depressions. Black loam predominated in the rest of the subregion, while north of Madras the red soils predominated. The immediate coastal strip, as indicated earlier, was pure saline sand.¹⁹

The chief river of Chingleput is the Palar which flows through North Arcot and enters Chingleput west of Kancipuram, falling into the sea at Sadras.

In 1884-85 in Chingleput rice accounted for 73 per cent of the land under food crops; ragi came next with 2 per cent.

18. B. Heyne, Tracts, Historical and Statistical on the Carnatic, pp. 1-3.

19. Spate and Learmonth, op.cit., p. 743.

34

In South Arcot rice accounted for 28 per cent of the land under food crops, followed by varagu (20 per cent), cumbu (10 per cent) and ragi (12 per cent).

Buchanan, the author of the celebrated Journey Through Mysore, Malabar, and Canara has left us with an interesting description of the countryside in the parts of the Carnatic that he passed through.²¹ He set out from Madras towards the end of the hot month of April (1800). The country appeared parched and bleak at that time of the year with no cultivation excepting rice that was approaching maturity and which could be seen growing in patches near tanks and resevoirs where there was sufficient water. His account of the countryside till he crossed over into Mysore points to the importance of tanks as major sources of irrigation, all along the route. He gives a detailed account of the Saymbrumbacum tank which irrigated the country around Cendataru due to which two crops of rice could be cultivated every year. Where the tank channels did not reach it, the soil was indifferent and barren. Between the Saymbrumbacum and the Permataru (another important

20. Agricultural Statistics 1884-85, op.cit., p 16-24.

21. Buchanan, Journey, Vol. I, op.cit., pp. 1-19.

irrigational tank near Kanchipuram) there was hardly any cultivation, except for ragi in patches and the palayra tree which would thrive on the poorest of soils. Near Kanchipuram, he noticed that the country was level but with an infertile soil consisting chiefly of coarse sand deriving its origin from decomposed granite. On his way to Arcot, he passed the Kaveripak tank which irrigated the nearby area giving it "a fertile, delightful appearance". The country beyond this was more barren and consisted of immense beds of granite. Here too, where reservoirs had been formed, narrow strips of land were being cultivated. Buchanan crossed the nearly-dry bed of the Palar at Arcot.²² Of the Palar valley and the road leading to Vellore, he says "... a greater verdure prevails here than any I have seen in the Carnatic, owing probably to a subterraneous supply ... the lower part of the valley, near the river, is very good land, and looks well, the greater part of it being verdant with the second crop of rice..."²³ While the Vellore valley was fertile enough to produce two crops, Buchanan commented on the "wretched villages" which stood out in marked contrast to the smiling fields.

22. Before the 11th century the Palar appears to have taken a course well to the north of its present course, but by the time that Buchanan wrote, it had shifted to its present day bed.

23. Buchanan, Travels.... Vol. I, p. 18.

The Tamil nad Hills

Between the Palar and the Kaveri coastal plain, are a discontinuous line of highland, made up of bold hill masses of which the chief are the Javadis, Shevaroyis, Malrayans and Panchamalais. The Palghat Gap, on an average 15 miles wide, is the only marked break in the great mountain wall on the west. The ghats on either side of this gap attain their maximum height in the hill group of the Nilgiris and Anaimalais, the Palnis being an offshoot of the latter, another less important offshoot of the ghats being the Marushanad-Anaimpatti ranges in the south. The hill groups north of the Kaveri appear to be one continuous block which has been separated into three main groups by the rivers Pennair and Vellar. The Javadis rise from 3,600-3,800ft., and the Shevaroyis from 5000-5500ft. The sides of the hills are covered with forests but agricultural tribes to cultivate foodcrops like ragi, cholam, gram, oilseeds and fruit. There is also some terraced rice cultivation.

24. For the discussion in this section see the following:
Spate and Learmonth, op.cit., pp. 749-750 and R. Ramamurthy
 'Some Aspects of the Regional Geography of Tamilnadu'
Madras Journal of the Geographical Association, (hereafter
 J.G.A.) Vol. XXII, No. 1, Jan.-March 1948, p. 15.

The Kaveri Delta

The Kaveri delta and its adjoining areas, comprising the whole of Tanjavur district forms a district geographical and agrarian subregion.

The district falls under three natural regions:-

1. The deltaic portion lying in the northern area.
2. The upland tracts of Tanjavur, Mannargudi and Pattukottai taluks and
3. The 'Vallam Tableland' lying to the West.

The deltaic region occupies more than half the total area of the district amounting to 10,350 sq.km. and accounts for the major part of its agricultural wealth. The river Kaveri, which provides the key to the agricultural prosperity of the deltaic region is about 765 km. in length, takes its rise in the Coorg mountains. It bifurcates 9 miles west of Trichinopoly town into two branches -- the northern and main branch is called the Aloroon (Kollidam), and the southern

25. The information contained in this sector has been taken from the foll:-

K.S. Chandrashekharan, 'The Physical Geography of Tanjore District', JICA, Vol. XII, p. 115,
 Spate and Leachmonth, Regional Geography of India,
op.cit., pp. 762 - 765
Tanjore District Manual, Vol. I, Madras Record Office,
 pp. 2-5.

retains the name Kaveri; seventeen miles down stream the two rivers nearly reunite to prevent which the Chola Kings built the Grand Anicut in the 11th Century, a mass of masonry 1,080ft. long and 40-60ft. From here the Coleroon takes a northeasterly course, and enters the sea at Divikottai. The Kaveri splits up into many distributaries and fans out, covering finally, in its eastern portion, the width of the entire district. This region is never at a loss for water. Numerous offshoots of the Kaveri find their way into the sea, others are lost in the wide expanse of rice fields. The Kaveri itself becomes an insignificant stream and enters the sea at Kaveri Pattinam, 8 miles north of Tranquebar.

The second region is an upland tract which forms an open level plain sloping down eastwards in which the taluks of Arantangi, Pattukottai, and the southern part of Annamangudi are included.

The third region lies to the south and southwest of Tanjore. The country here rises above the surrounding plain and although small is called the "Vallam Table Land" Grits, conglomerates and sand stone chiefly constitute the plateau.

The regar or black soil occurs in greatest abundance accounting for 45 per cent of the total area of the district. River Alluvium covers 27 per cent of the area. A noteworthy

feature is that the taluks of Kumbakonam and Tanjore are wholly made up of river alluvium and till very recently manure was considered unnecessary to raise crops in this soil.

Rainfall is unequally distributed, it being much heavier on the coast where a small strip receives 55" of rain. Rainfall diminishes as one goes inland; and 45 per cent of its fall occurs in October through December.

The strikingly predominant crop is paddy, accounting for 82 per cent of the total area under food crops.

67

The Dry South-East

The districts of Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Tirunelveli and Kanya Kumari fall under this subregion. Historically, the distinctive feature of this region, lies in the fact that it

26. Agricultural Statistics 1934-35, op.cit., p.

27. The discussion in this section is based on information contained in the following books and articles:

T.N. Anthuswami, 'Physical Geography of the Madurai District' JGA, Vol. VII; 1932-33, 3.Oct. 1932, pp. 124-129.

G. Narayanaswami 'Subregions of the Madurai District' JGA, Vol. VIII, 1932-33.

No.3, Oct. 1932, pp. 193-195(1); Spate and Leachmonth, A Regional Geography of India and Pakistan, op.cit., p.171-

K. Ramamurthy, 'Some Aspects of the Regional Geography of Tamilnadu'.

was never subjugated by a central power before that of the British raj. It is the main cotton growing region of Tamil-nadu (Madurai, Ramanthapuram and Tirunelveli account for over half the states cotton acreage. In the absence of adequate rainfall, tanks form the main source of irrigation, the area served by them reaching its maximum extent in Madurai and Ramanathapuram.

Striking north-east across the district of Madurai, the Varushavad-Andipatti range forms part of the boundary between Madurai district and the district of Ramanathapuram. The Palanis in which the Suruli/Upper Vaigai valley is set and the Varushanad-Andipatti hills almost converge around the great bend of the river Vaigai; these ranges (the highest peak reaching upto 6,000ft.) continue into the north-east on the Kaveri watershed as hills. The rivers Vaigai, Periar; and Suruli which flow through the region take their rise in these hills.

The fertile Kambam valley lies between the Cardamom scarp on the west and the Varushavad-Andipatti range. The valley is a broad flood plain of red loam, deep and with an underlying layer of rock fragments. The Suruli river flows through its central part. Rice and millets are the staples on the Kaveri watershed to the north; around Dindigul tobacco is cultivated to a limited extent.

The Ramanathapuram tank country lies east of the hills. Its peninsula is formed by alluvium brought down by the Vagai from the hills. The plain is covered by coconut, palmyra paddy and millet, apart from the low thorny scrub that abounds on this lateritic surface. The region is largely arid and desolate with very low rainfall (34") and poor soils. All hollows and depressions are dammed for water and no stream is allowed to escape untapped. It has been pointed out that this development of tank irrigation over the centuries has in effect suppressed all natural flow since the streams are captured from the start. Except after the heavy rains of November and December, practically all the tanks and streams remain dry.

There is an extensive regur or black soil tract north of the Tirunelveli district where the tank country ends. This region has the ^Wlowest rainfall average of Tamilnadu (25"-27"). Over 80 per cent of the soil here known as Karisal is under cotton. The major crops areumbu, cotton, and cholam, grown in rotation.

South of the Tambraparni basin lies the Teri (sandy wastes) tract of Tirunelveli. These form little rolling plateaus upto 20 sq. miles in area at 110-220 ft. Most of this region is waste, covered by poor accacia scrub. Paddy is grown under the rain fed tanks, but most often the soil

yields only poor crops of the variety of millets and gram. The teri region is famous for the palmyra tree which grows abundantly and provides full or part time employment to a large part of its population.

The Tambraparniriver rises at 600ft. in the southern ghats. It receives directly the benefit of the south west monsoon showers. Two good crops are raised in its valley. The otherwet crops are plantains, turmeric and sugar-cane. Chillies and gingelly are occasionally irrigated and ragi²⁸ and cholam are rain fed.

28. According to the Agricultural Statistics of 1884-85, in Madurai rice accounted for 16.13 per cent of the total land under food crops.
Agricultural Statistics 1884-85. p 16-21.

CHAPTER - II

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

For a reconstruction of the specific features of the systems of agricultural production that were practised in our region during the 18th century, we have had to depend mainly, on sources of the early colonial period. South Indian agricultural production was shaped by a number of factors both natural and man-made. The fairly even spread of the rains¹ (as compared to north India) made for the possibility of some form of agricultural activity throughout the year; irrigation was still essential, of course, particularly for rice cultivation in order to eliminate the possibilities of a crop failure. Although it would be difficult to compute exactly how much, there appears to have been a large quantity of unoccupied land. In fact, during the second half of the 18th century, the effects of war seems to have resulted in a great fall in the extent of cultivated lands as seen from the fall in paddy production during that period, and also from other eye-witness² accounts. Abbe'Dubois the French missionary observed in 1797

2. To the havoc of war with Hyder Ali in 1784, in Tanjore, "succeeded the affliction of famine; and the emigrations arising from these successive calamities nearly depopulated the district."

While in the year previous to the war paddy production was roughly 11 million cullums in Tanjore, in 1781 and 1782, it dropped to a little over 1 million cullums. See Tanjore Commissioners Report 1792, Govt. Gazettee Office, Madras, Para 19, p. 15.

how an increasing amount of land, cultivable and once cultivated was becoming waste in South India. He calculated the waste land as covering one-fourth of the whole region.³

The "extensive, labour-saving character" of South Indian agriculture has been pointed to as one of its more important features,⁴ which was reflected in the cultivation by households of their land in parcels, the use of the most profitable methods of rice-transplantation, the practice of broadcast sowing with dry seeds etc. In times when extra labour was needed for agricultural operations such as sowing and harvesting, it was from the untouchable, depressed classes that such labour was drawn. The latter, forced by social and economic circumstances to work for others, often in conditions of slavery⁵ were yet essential to the production system: their origins can be traced to a very early period and would require separate investigation.

3. Cited in N. Mukherjee, The Ryotwari System in Madras, 1792-1827, Calcutta, 1962.

4. Cambridge Economic History of India, ed. T. Raychaudhuri and I. Habib, Vol. I, Cambridge 1982, p. 228. For a useful discussion of agricultural production in South India see chapter VIII.

5. For a brief historical discussion of the social and economic dimensions of untouchability see Chapter III.

Irrigation

The construction, maintenance and upkeep of irrigation works being beyond the resources of a single household, was usually undertaken by a group of households or the village as a whole.⁶ However, the construction of large scale works like canals, dams, and large reservoirs were generally undertaken by the state or local potentates who being the recipients of the major portion of the revenues were vitally interested in their upkeep.⁷

The Grand Anicut, rightly called the 'bulwark of the fertility of the Tanjore country' built by the Cola Kings in the 11th century was active in the 18th century. It was built in order to regulate the flood waters from the Kaveri from flowing into the Kollidam (Coleroon) - a solid mass of rough stone in clay 1090 feet in length.⁸ In Madurai district, prior

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6. The bulk of evidence from inscriptions of the Cola period on irrigation relates to the maintenance of tanks by village assemblies (Ur). Often a special cess (eriyayan) was collected from the inhabitants for this. K.A.N. Sastri, The Colas, Madras, 1975 (reprint) o. 583. Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol. I, op.cit., p. 227.
 7. 'Before this Country was conquer'd (by the) Mogulls it was Divided into Several Circles under the Government of Particular Rajahs which descended from Father to Son. Their Revenues for the most Part arose from the Produce of the Land, and they therefore were always carefull to keep up the Banks of the Tanks of Reservoirs of Water...' (1730-1735). Love, Vestiges of Old Madras, 1640-1800, & Co, Vol. II, London, 1913.
 8. Tanjore District Gazetteer, p. 104.

to the construction of the Periar project, most irrigation works were built before British rule, many of them having been constructed by Poligar chiefs. The largest pre-British scheme was the Peranai Anicut across the Vaigai.⁹

The Kambukal channel in Chingleput district could elicit the admiration of a 19th century writer as a work of the greatest hydraulic skill. It left the Polar at an anicut some 20-30 miles west of Kanchipuram, was carried along a natural ridge for some distance, and then dropped into Chingleput taluq where traces of it could be seen as far as the sea coast. In its course of 50 to 60 miles it supplied¹⁰ countless tanks. Buchanan has left a detailed account of the various canals taken off from the Kaveri in the Karaikal district.

In spite of the fact that in the south rainfall was more regular and more evenly distributed throughout the year, irrigation was still essential and each peasant had to have a portion of his land artificially irrigated in order to reduce

9. Madurai District Gazetteer, Vol. I, p. 123.

10. Chingleput District Manual, Madras 1879, p. 209.

the risks of a crop failure. In Thanjavur and Trichinopoly districts, irrigation, from a very early period, was effected by canals and water courses taken from the Kaveri and Kollidam rivers. In fact, in the four subas of Tiruvadi, Kumbakonam, Mayavaram and Mannargudi, the use of tanks were almost¹² obviated. In other districts tanks were the most important method of irrigation, followed by wells, water courses, natural springs etc. Canals assumed less importance in the south, as the rivers here being rain fed, their level fluctuated during the year and thus made dependence upon them a risk for the peasant. In most parts of India, in the beginning of the 19th century, only 3-7 per cent of the cultivated area was irrigated.¹³ The Thanjavur, however, the ratio was nearer 50 per cent.

Tanks

We have some very interesting data about the spread and types of tanks in the Carnatic, more particularly in the Jaghire (present day Chingleput district) for our period. As early as 1678, the Abbe 'Carre, the French traveller noticed

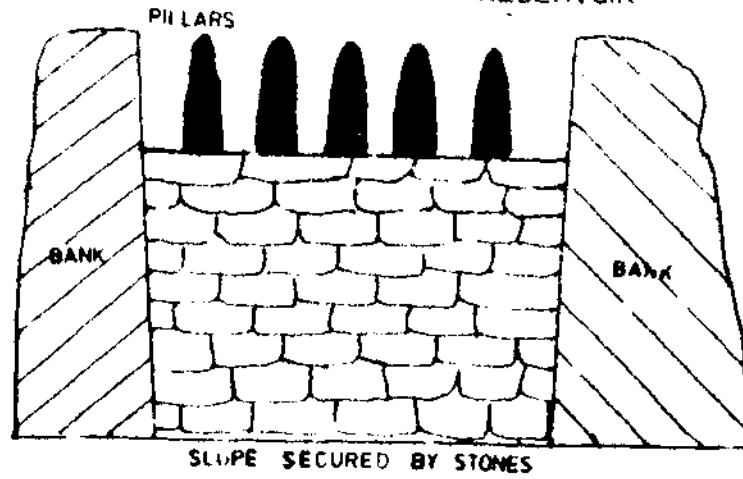
12. There is much early literary evidence to show that the agricultural prosperity of the Cola country was because of the Kaveri. The names of the several branches of this river are traceable in the Chola inscriptions of this period. See K.A.N. Sastri, The Colas, Madras 1975(reprint) p. 18-19 ; also Tanjore Commissioners Report 1799 Appendix p. 1.

13. Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol. I, pp. 226-27.

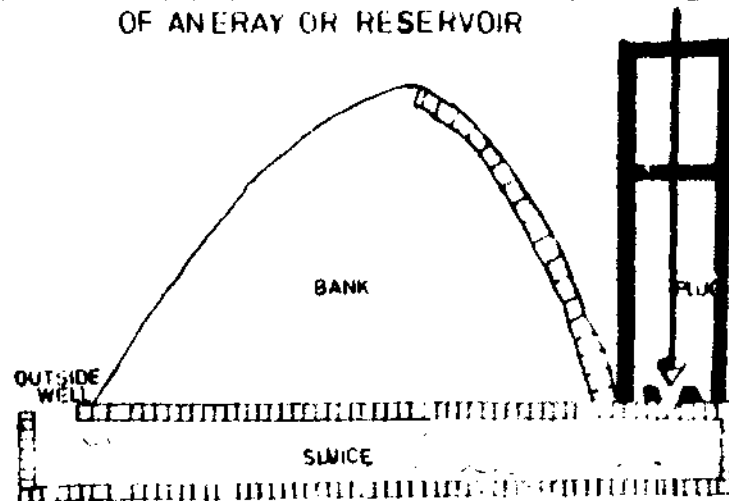
how water for cultivation was obtained '... in a very wonderful way. They first draw it out with a wood machine like the crane they use for raising cut stones in building houses. Then they pour the water through a number of little channels which wind round the place to be watered. This is the only way of cultivating the earth for 9 or 10 months in the year, when the heat is unbelievable, without a single drop of rain.' ¹⁴ Buchanan wrote that the inhabitants distinguished between two types of tanks, one being the culam, excavated for bathing and washing purposes. These were usually small reservoirs. The other was the 'Erav' (Yeri) which was formed by the banking of a valley or depression so that the rain water was collected in the upper part of the valley, and was let out through the lower part by sluices. He described in detail the 'Sayabrambacum' (Chembarambakkam) Yeri which was made by an artificial bank blocking the opening between two natural ridges of ground. The tank was 7-8 miles in length and 3 in breadth, sufficient to water the lands of thirty two villages (should the rains fail) for 18 months. These villages had around 5000 people engaged in agriculture. A notable feature of such irrigational works

14. Abbe 'Carre, The Travels of the Abbe 'Carre in India and the Near East 1672 to 1674, translated by Lady Fawcett, ed. Charles Fawcett, Vol. , Hakluyt Society, 1747 and 1948, p. 359; see also W. Hamilton, Description of Hindustan and the Adjacent Countries, 1820 Vol. II, p. 400.

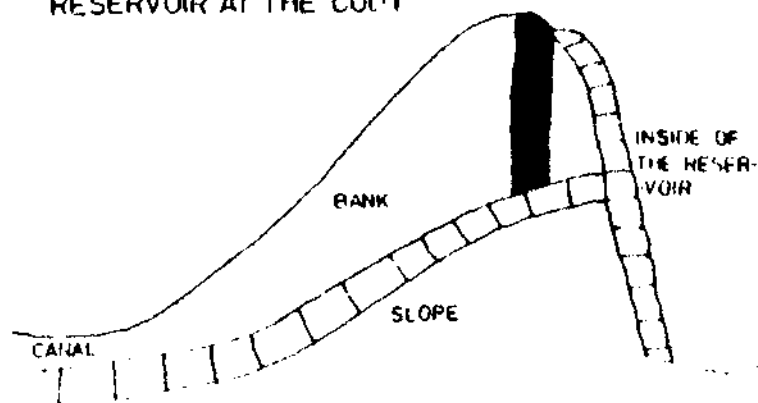
VIEW OF THE BODY OF A RESERVOIR



TRANSVERSE SECTION OF THE BANK AND SLUICE OF AN ERAY OR RESERVOIR



TRANSVERSE SECTION OF THE BANK OF A RESERVOIR AT THE BODY



37

were the 'codies' or sluices of stone, 20 or 30 feet wide, constructed along the bank of support it. On the surface they were strongly fortified by large stones placed in a sloping direction for the water to rush over it without undermining the bank. Water from the reservoir was conveyed to the fields through a sluice lined with cut stone and placed under the bank on a level with the country. The inner end of the sluice was plugged tightly and water let out whenever necessary¹⁵ (see diagram). At Kaveri-pakkam, there was another Yeri about 8 miles in length and 3 in breadth which "fertilised a considerable extent of territory"¹⁶. Again, there was a tank at Sri Permaturu in the Jaghire which although smaller than the Chembarambakkam tank, nevertheless irrigated the lands of an extensive village which contained 2137 acres of rice land; 436 acres of dry grain ground; and a large extent of pasture land.¹⁷ Yeris were generally supplied with water from rivers.

The political and economic chaos that characterised our period and the penetration of British interests into the countryside, resulted, among other things, in the total neglect and lack of maintenance of irrigation works. It was only at a

15. Buchanan, Travels ..., Vol. I, pp. 3-4, 11-12.

16. Ibid., p. 16.

17. Ibid., p. 6.

later stage that company administrators realised the link between falling or insufficient revenues of a particular or group of villages and the condition of its irrigation works.¹⁸

Next in importance to tanks were the water courses from rivers and 'cashems' (Persian, chashma?) or natural springs from large excavations on their borders, from where channels conducted the water to the paddy fields.¹⁹ The agriculturally rich valley of Vellore in North Arcot district which Buchanan wrote of as "one of the finest tracts in the Carnatic" was irrigated by canals from the river Kolar. Because of the high water table, even when the river channel was dry, water was obtained by digging canals in the river bed six or seven feet deep which would traverse the river channel diagonally and convey water to the fields.²⁰

18. Place, the collector of the Jaghire in the closing year of the 18th century, traced the chief cause of the dilapidation of the tanks in the Jaghire, to the poor condition of the calingaloos, or outlets of masonry to carry off the superfluous water. He set himself energetically to the task of repairing tanks in the Jaghire which immediately enhanced revenues. See Place's Report on the Jaghire 1799, Paras 505-506, 508 and 515.

19. For an idea of the value of village water courses, Place mentions the water course of Nerumbur in Chingleput purgunnah which had got choked up. The expense of repairing it came to Pags. 434, but after that it yielded a revenue of Pags. 1600 in three years.

20. Buchanan, Travels...., Vol. I, p. 23; See North Arcot-district Manual, Vol. I, p. 259.

Various methods were employed for the purpose of raising water out of wells/tanks for irrigation, which were in use all over the Carnatic.²¹ If the level of the water was not too low, a palmyra leaf basket, with four ropes attached, two on each side, was used, worked by persons holding a rope each. The basket was dipped in the water and swung up when full to the level of the channel and the contents jerked into it. For greater heights the Picotah (Yettam) or Kanila were used -- the former was worked by men and the latter by cattle. To supply one Kani of paddy ground with water, the constant labour of four men was required and in the case of garden land, the same number of men working the Yettam could water 3 kanis.²² The Yettam is a long pole with a bamboo into which is attached a bucket at one end. Men or boys walk along it, raising or dipping it, supporting themselves by a bamboo rail. For some reason, women never worked the machines except in the highland ghat area.

The Kanila lift is a large leathern or iron bucket, having a long leathern tail, and open at the end. One rope is

21. Madura District Gazetteer, Vol. I, p. 123; and Trichinopoly District Gazetteer, Vol. I, p. 148.

22. Buchanan, Travels, Vol. I, pp. 15-16;
Also, North Arcot District Manual, Vol. I, p. 259

attached to the top of the bucket and the other to its tail. One rope passes over a wheel working between two posts inclined over the water, and the other runs over a roller on a level with ground. The two ropes are yoked to a pair of bullocks. As soon as the bucket is filled the bullocks move down the slope. While being lifted, the two ends of the bucket are on a level with each other and therefore no water escapes. As soon as the level of the channel is reached, the tail is drawn over the roller and the whole amount of water is discharged into the channel.²³

Crops And Cropping Patterns

Details of crops and cropping patterns in the different regions of the Carnatic in the 18th century are not readily available from our sources. However, by working backwards from later (19th century), data on cropping patterns, and using the scattered references to crop types from the sources of our period, we are able to arrive at a fairly accurate idea of what was grown.

23. Wilson's Glossary ..., p. 260
North Arcot District Manual, Vol. I, p. 259.
Trichinopoly District Gazetteer, Vol. I, p. 148

A broad three-fold classification of agricultural land existed²⁴ which was determined by the facilities available for irrigation (a pattern which is equally a feature of modern-day agriculture). This in turn determined the type(s) of grain cultivated. Nanjai was land on which wet cultivation (mostly of rice) was carried out. Such lands were assured of a constant supply of water as in the dry season it was artificially irrigated by tanks/wells/canals. Punjai lands were those that were irrigated entirely by the rains; grains such as ragi, millet, vargu, maize were cultivated upon them. The third type of land was garden or Thotakai land which was also artificially irrigated, but was of far greater value as upon them were grown cash crops like tobacco, vegetables, chillies, betel etc.

The major crop on the nanjai land, was rice, the cultivating seasons of which were divided broadly into the Kar and the Pesharun, named after the principle varieties of of paddy. In all the districts, the Kar crop which was the more productive one was planted in the tamil month of Ani (June-July) and harvested in Arpisi (September) and the

24. Benjamin Heyne, Tracts on India with Journals of Tours in the Peninsula and Account of Sumatra, 1814 (hereafter B. Heyne, Tracts.....). p. 5. Also W. Hamilton, Description..... OR. Sit., Vol. II, p. 400.

37

Pesaranam crop was sown in Avani (September) and harvested in Masi (January or February). Very often in January after the Pesaranam harvesting, a third, two-month crop was sown (called Vaval Pavaru in Tanjore) which was harvested in March. When only a single crop of paddy was grown, a dry crop (like ragi or gingelly or the above mentioned Vaval pavam) seemed an auxiliary to it. ²⁵ An 18th century tract on agriculture, in the Carnatic has the following to say on the seasons of paddy cultivation. "The farmers raise four different crops in the year and two of these are raised on the same ground. The first is called Kauroo punta, and is sown from the middle of the month of May to the middle of June, and is cut in September. In good seasons it produces fifty kalams, or an increase of fifty-fold. The second crop is distinguished by the name Kauroo-punta but is planted in June and July, and is expected to give a forty-fold return. The third crop, called sambha, is planted in July, August, and September, and is ripe in January and February: like the second crop it is expected to

25. Tanjore District Manual, Vol. I, p. 354. There were a fairly wide range of rice types cultivated. For example, in Trichinopoly, there were 8 types of rice grown on Nanai lands. Apart from the Kar (consumed mainly by the lower classes) and the Peshanum (consumed uniformly among all classes) the other fast growing and inferior types of rice were Andy Valam (sown and transplanted in February and reaped in July); Veeral Valam, sown and transplanted in July, and reaped in January, again of a very low quality; and a species of similar quality Authy Valam sown and transplanted in January and reaped in June. A variety of rice called Sophadass, sown and transplanted in August and reaped in January was of a very superior quality. See Wallace's Report on Trichinopoly, 1802. Board of Revenue Proceedings, Statement No. 1.

26. B. Heyne, Tracts op.cit., p. 6.

yield a forty-fold return. The fourth crop, called navara-punta, is sown between the middle of November and the middle of January, and ripens in April and May. It is the least productive of all, yielding between twenty and thirty-fold.

Methods Of Rice Cultivation

On very fertile and level ground, the grain is sown by the hand, but in most cases it is transplanted from nurseries. For a Kani (1.32 acres) of land, from one-third and half of a kalum (one kalum ²⁷ 96 lbs of seed) was required. The produce differed according to the season in which it was planted. There were two methods of rice cultivation that was practised in Chingleput: ²⁸ Settukal or sprouted seed cultivation and Puluthikal or dry seed cultivation. In the former method, after the land was prepared by irrigating, manuring and ploughing, the seed corn was sown broadcast; the seed was also left to grow for forty or fifty days in nurseries, and when it was 9 inches to a foot long, it was transplanted into prepared fields. Dry seed cultivation was distinguished from the first

27. See Tanjore Commissioners Report, 1799, op.cit., Appendix, pp. 1-2; also, Plase's Report on the Jachire, 1799 (hereafter Plase's Report ...), Board of Revenue Misc. with appendices, Vol. 45, para 433.

28. Chingleput District Manual, Vol. I, p. 36.

month and a half to two months was produced by the moisture in the ground caused by rainfall and not by irrigation, after which period the fields were kept constantly irrigated by artificial means. In the Tanjore delta region, the invariable mode of irrigated cultivation was transplanting; there was only one variety of paddy sown broadcast which was confined to the upland parts of the district.

The productivity of each crop varied in accordance with the particular season in which it was grown. The Kar crop was the more productive although it covered a smaller extent when compared to the Peshanum crop (in Tanjore the Kar species²⁹ accounted for around 1/6th of the entire paddy crop). It was estimated that one Veli (6.6 acres) of panjai land well cultivated with Peshanum seed produced in good soil 400 kalams; in indifferent soil, 200 kalams, and in poor grounds under particular local disadvantages from 50-100 kalams, but the Kar produce was³⁰ greater in every variety of soil.

Manuring was essential for the success of the crop. While ploughing, manure of earth, leaves, ashes, cowdung etc. was used. Flocks were folded on the fields and "the sheep and

29. Tanjore District Manual, op.cit., p. 354.

30. Tanjore Report, 1799, op.cit., pp. 1-2.

64

goat keepers, provided they be fed themselves by the farmer during the interval, will drive their flocks for a few weeks on the field after the removal of the first paddy crop...."³¹ which suggests that it could have been only the more well-to-do farmer who could afford this method of certainly the most productive method of manuring in practice then. Crop-rotation and the system of fallows were not practised on naniai lands, something which Buchanan noticed and contemptuously commented on,³² but this was certainly not because the peasant was ignorant of its advantages in certain types of cultivation (as for example on Puniai lands), but because naniai cultivation did not require it. Fields were inundated with water at various stages in the rice growing process, and the water itself contained the necessary minerals and other fertilising agents so necessary for the soil.

The following table shows the average gross produce of paddy (in kalams per Veli) in the several districts of southern India from the end of the 18th to the beginning years of the

31. B. Hayne, Treatise ... op.cit., p. 5.
It was estimated that 1 kani (1.32 acres) of land might be well manured if a pack of 1000 head spend 5-6 nights on it. Afterwards the field produced well for 6-7 years Ratnam, cited in Cambridge Economic History of India, op.cit., p. 231.

32. Buchanan, Travels..... Vol. I, p. 93

19th century. ³³

District	Year	Output in Ralams* per Veli**
Madura	1796	84.6
Tanjore	1774	150.5
Tanjore (low districts)	1801-2	196
Tanjore (high districts)	1801-2	114.2
South Arcot	1819-20	158
Chingleput	1788	78
Tirunelveli	1802-03 to 1807-08	51
	(average for a year)	

* 1 Ralam = 220.8 lb in all districts except in Tanjore and South Arcot where it was equal to 47-4 lbs.

** 1 Veli = 6.6 acres

It has been pointed out that the figures, while higher than present day ones were nevertheless deflated figures, stemming from the fact that part of the production figures must have been concealed from the taxation authorities and that even the very poor lands must have been included in this computation.

33. The table has been taken from the Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol. I, pp. 211., p. 232.

TABLE - II : AREA UNDER SELECT CROPS IN THE DISTRICTS OF THE MADRAS
PRESIDENCY FOR THE YEARS 1884 - 85 (in Acres).

(Figures in brackets denote the percentage of the area of the particular crop to the total cropped area.)

DISTRICT	TOTAL CROPPED AREA	RICE	MILLET	CHULAH	RAGY	CUMBU	VARAGU
NELLOR	1,044,111	245,673 (23.5)	51	289,685 (27.7)	49,104 (4.7)	45,784 (4.38)	21,530 (2.06)
CHINGLEPIT	653,731	442,545 (67.6)	--	9,418 (1.4)	46,959 (7.18)	11,801 (1.8)	41,142 (6.29)
NORTH ARCOT	826,377	303,692 (36.9)	--	44,505 (5.38)	124,669 (15.08)	76,212 (9.22)	67,911 (8.12)
SOUTH ARCOT	1,296,527	340,740 (26.28)	--	52,188 (4.02)	139,877 (10.78)	208,067 (16.17)	240,798 (18.57)
TANJORE	1,193,451	931,733 (78)	--	14,248 (1.19)	34,533 (2.89)	27,207 (2.27)	71,992 (6.03)
TRICHINOPOLY	965,211	173,570 (17.98)	--	129,263 (13.39)	101,260 (10.49)	164,024 (16.99)	121,035 (12.53)
MADURAI	910,966	146,947 (16.13)	--	119,421 (13.10)	86,405 (9.48)	107,790 (11.83)	85,391 (9.37)
TINNEVELLY	1,306,923	259,108 (19.82)	--	91,009 (6.96)	43,064 (3.29)	201,608 (15.42)	46,263 (3.53)

SOURCE : RETURNS OF THE AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS OF INDIA,
1884-85, CALCUTTA 1904, p. 16-21.

Table II shows the extent of land under the various food crops for the year 1884-85. Although we do not have quantitative data of this reliability for our period which could serve as a basis for comparison, it is clear that the major rice growing areas were the same during our period as well, i.e., mainly the Kaveri basin comprising the districts of Tanjavur and Trichinopoly; and Chingleput and South Arcot.

Dry Cultivation

While rice was certainly the most extensively grown crop in South India, the 'dry grains' like the various kinds of millets (cholan, ragi, vargu), maize, gingelly occupied a comparable area, although of the least productive land. The distinct demarcation of the cultivating seasons (as the Rabi and kharif in the north) was not applicable to the south. Even though there were grains on the Pudai lands that were grown and harvested in correspondence with the Kar and Pasanam ³⁴ several of the dry grains were also grown in both seasons. The principle dry grains cultivated, according to a contemporary account were "aruga, ragie, of which there are three varieties,

34. For example, in North Arcot dry crops (Kumbu, red gram, horse gram, castor) were sown from May to Sept./Oct. and harvested from August to Dec./Jan. On the wet lands in August/Sept., ragi and cholan, and in Feb./ March the paddy crop, were harvested.

sajja, jouna, chauma and corra (millet). The three first of these are sown in the beginning of the rains in June, are ripe in September and yield on an average a twenty-fold produce; the next ³⁵ are sown in August and are ripe in November. A little of the following kinds of grain is grown in October and is ripe in January—minuma, pessara, walawa, kanda, bobbara and alsanda.³⁵ Ragi was a cereal that was cheap therefore widely consumed among the poorer classes; in the Jaghire it accounted for roughly 1/3 of the whole extent of Punjai cultivation.³⁶ In Tirunelveli district which is a low rainfall area, dry cultivation was largely prevalent. Here the system of keeping the land fallow was prevalent in the southern sandy tracts of Nunguneri. Fallow lands accounted for as much as 1/3-2/3 of the land, according to the season. The soil here was scratched with the plough and grain, a very poor grain was scattered broadcast yielding a small crop. For dry crops too, manuring³⁷ was important; seven cart loads to the acre was the usual dose.³⁷

The cultivation of palmyra was fairly widespread. Although mainly practised in Tirunelveli, Buchanan observed³⁸ its growth in the drier regions of North Arcot district.

35. B. Heyne, Tracts ..., op.cit., p. 6.

36. Place's Report on the Jaghire, 1799, op.cit., para 435.

37. Manual of the Tinnevely District, Madras, 1879, p.26.

38. See Buchanan, Travels..., Vol. I, pp. 9-10.

Jaggery was made from the sweet juice of the palmyra tree and sold, by the caste called shanas. "The Shanans", Buchanan wrote, "mounts the palmyra tree morning and evening in order to collect the exuded juice; which through the day he and his family boil down into jaggery." One man could manage 200 trees from which he could extract about 482 lbs of jaggery worth around 6 pagodas. Apart from this the shanan could sell one or two fannas worth of tari (or fermented juice). The total profit that the shanan could finally make from 200 trees, was $10.3\frac{1}{2}$ pagodas, a sum Buchanan estimated could hardly maintain a family "in a country where provisions are by no means cheap."

Garden Crops

Garden or Tottakal lands were punjai lands brought under irrigation which were reserved exclusively for the cultivation of high grade cash crops like vegetables, chillies, tobacco, betel etc.

The best cotton was grown on the black cotton soils of Tirunelveli, and to a certain extent Madurai as well. The cotton cultivated along the coast was the common 'dwarf cotton'; it also grew in North Arcot district near Vellore "very luxuriantly between the stones ... at present the cotton is collected there."³⁹

39. B. Mayne, Tracts ..., p. 8.

However, on the whole, cotton cultivation was not too extensive and its production was certainly inadequate for local consumption. In the main cloth manufacturing centres of South India, cotton was imported from the Maratha country, Nagpur and some of the native states. ⁴⁰ As cotton was a risky crop and exhausted the soil easily, it was only the rich farmer who could afford its regular cultivation.

Sugar cane was cultivated to a limited extent in Chingleput at the close of the 18th century, as soil conditions were not suitable for its extensive cultivation. As in the case of cotton, sugar-cane was also a capital and labour intensive crop. Buchanan has described the labour consuming method of its cultivation. The land had to be irrigated, allowed to dry, ploughed, rested and then alternately manured and ploughed about a dozen times altogether. ⁴¹

Horticultural farming was practised only by the few who could afford it. The taste for exotic fruit not indigenous or common to the Carnatic and the methods of cultivating them could have been introduced by Mughal nobles who brought it from their own region where we know horticulture was a highly developed art. We hear of the Nawabs extensive garden in Satghadam which he let out to Armenians in Madras. "The garden

40. See S. Sarada Raju, Economic Conditions in the Madras Presidency 1800-1860, Madras 1941, p. 39.

41. Buchanan, Travels ..., Vol. II, op.cit., p. 102.

is a large piece of ground, thickly planted with a variety of fruit trees; and to the roots of each water is conveyed by separate canals..."; the fruits were considered the choicest in the Carnatic.⁴²

Although the peasant's implements of labour were rudimentary, they were well suited to the conditions of the soil and cultivation. Almost all operations had a special implement. The ploughs were made of a hard and brittle wood that was moisture resistant. The ploughshare was generally made of iron of about 8 inches long. For the cultivation of drier and more difficult terrain the ploughs were made of a tougher wood called 'maddie' (ficus) strengthened by a much larger ploughshare in order to overcome the hardness of the soil.⁴³ The plough in fact only loosened and did not actually turn the soil which was unnecessary; the depth of ploughing was from 3-5 inches. Other implements used were seed-drills, hoes, sickles and so on.

We have been able to compile a time series showing some aspects of agricultural production in quantitative terms for only one Carnatic province viz., Chingleput and (see Table III)

42. Buchanan, Travels....., Vol. I, p. 24

43. B. Heyne, Tracts....., pp. 6-7.

TABLE - III

DISTRICT - CHINGLEPUT*

Y E A R S	Extent of cultivated land (in acres)			Produce From Nanjai Land		Average paddy yield in lbs/ACRE	Total Population	Land/Person Ratio	
	NANJAI	PUNJAI	TOTAL	BALAN	HERK. MEAS.				
1795	252,958.9	77,369.8	330,327.68	950,058	2	3	454.08	252,353	1.31
1796	278,487.6	99,958.9	368,446.65	1,106,499	10	6	479.57	254,237	1.45
1797	263,185.23	76,909.47	340,094.7	765,177	2	0	351.21	271,372	1.25
1897-98	478,624	--	745,972	--	--	--	936 (Period ending 1900-01)	1,201,183	0.62
1901-02	493,223**	--	808,584	--	--	--	936 (Period ending 1900-01)	1,201,183	0.67

SOURCE: For the years from 1795-97, the figures have been taken from 'A general Abstract of the Turrabaddy and Ieerva Accounts of the Jagheer for Fussis 1205, 1206 and 1207,' MS. Board of Revenue (Miss) Series, Madras Record Office. For the years 1897-1902 the figures are from the Agricultural Statistics of India, 1897-98 to 1901-02, Calcutta, 1904, pp. 224, 231 and 381. The population figure given for the two years 1897-98 and 1901-02, is the Chingleput district population figure for 1891, taken from the Statistical Appendix to Chingleput District - Madras 1912, p. 2.

* 1 Kalam = 120.3 lbs.

** This figure pertains to the area under rice cultivation only.

Figures have been taken for the end of the 18th and late 19th century which pertain to the extent of cultivated land, the gross produce, average yields and the cultivated land person ratio; all relevant indices of the extent and quality of agricultural growth.

It will be noted from the table that while paddy yields between the late 18th and early 19th century almost trebled, the extent of land under cultivation increased only two-fold. Population on the other hand increased almost five-fold, which in a situation where there was no great increase in the extent of cultivation or radical changes in the agricultural system (like the construction of new irrigation schemes or the introduction of a high yield cropping pattern), increased the pressure on land tremendously, as seen in the sharp fall in the average extent of cultivated land per person.

In conclusion of this chapter, we would like to present some information on the costs of cultivation for the Thanjavur districts,⁴⁴ which although for a slightly later period, would nevertheless be of some interest and relevance for our study. Comparisons have been made of the costs of cultivation under two different systems of production organisation: one, the Panneival system where the landlord got his field cultivated by agricultural labourers (most often bonded) and paid them daily wages in cash or kind, and two, the Purakudi system or

44. Sanjore District Manual, Vol.I, p. 390-95.

tenent cultivation where the tenent received a certain share of the crop (which varied from 18-33 per cent in different parts) and surrendered the rest to the landlord. The calculation have been made on the premise that one plough with a pain of bullocks and one farm labourer could cultivate one Veli (5.67 acres), and that the gross produce on this quantity of land was 124.51 Tanjore kalams (1 kalam 63.69 lbs), or 21.96 kalams an acre. Taking into account all costs incurred, including seeds, wages, fees to village officials, various allowances to the labourer for marriages and festivals, the costs of implements and repairs, manuring etc., the cost of cultivation of one acre was Rs.7 and 8.5 paise. Under purakudi cultivation where the tenants share was 25 per cent of the gross produce the costs of cultivation were Rs.7, A. 6, P. 4. If Purakudi cultivation-costs (where the tenent rendered up as much as 75 per cent of his produce) were less than Pannaiyal cultivation-costs, it would only underline the extremely exploitative nature of the latter system. The existence this class of bonded agricultural labourers was essential to sustain the system of agricultural production, particularly in Thanjavur province. In support of this argument we have evidence to show that during the years of the war with Hyder Ali, a large number of these slaves were captured, some were physically

exterminated and many fled, causing a sharp fall in agricultural productivity in the region;⁴⁵ the disbalance was rectified by the leasing out of lands to immigrant tenants.

45. See Tanjore Commissioners Report 1792, p. 15-16.

CHAPTER - III

THE VILLAGE COMMUNITY AND PEASANT STATUS

A very important, and possibly basic component of the agrarian order in India upto the beginning of the 19th century was the village community; this seems to have assumed a specific and complex line of development in the south. To an external observer every village formed a compact and self-sufficient unit with large numbers of peasants and artisans apparently placed at the same level of bare subsistence. The village community struck early British observers as a particularly resilient and, in fact, 'unchanging' socio-economic formation, that in a large measure, accounted for the stagnation of Indian society. The most representative of the description in which the corporate nature of Indian village life, is particularly stressed, are those contained in the Fifth-Report¹ and in Wilks' History of Mysore. Sometime later, based, in fact, on these and other contemporary accounts, came Marx' incisive interpretation of the village community.

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1. See the description of the village community in the Fifth Report from the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company, 1912, in British Parliamentary Papers, Colonies East India, 3, Irish University Press, 1969, pp. 85, also, Mark Wilks, Historical Sketches of the South of India (& Co.), Mysore, 1930, pp. 136-139. Wilks' account was in turn based on Munro's Report on Anantapur, written in 1806.

Marx's views on the nature of the village community evolved, over time, some of the pronouncements he made in his early writings (as for example his view that in India land was originally cultivated in common or his statements on the self-sufficiency or natural economy of the Indian village), should be seen in the light of his own later modifications² on the subject. His researches led him to the opinion that the Indian village system defined the basic form of the labour process in pre-colonial India. He advanced the reasons as to why the village system acted as an impediment to change and progress; there was, integrated into the village system two apparently contradictory phenomena; on the one hand a lack of development of the division of labour which resulted in the domestic union of craft and agriculture" while on the other hand the establishment of an unalterable division of labour solidified through the caste system. Marx certainly did recognise the fact of commodity production taking place in the village, although he allowed for a much lower level than what actually existed, limited as he was by his sources. Marx's penetrating insights into the functioning of village society remains of inestimable value for any study

2. See I. Habib, Marx's Perceptions on India, in The Marxist, Vol. I, August-September 1983, pp. 92-142

111

3

of Indian agrarian society. But these have first to be verified by our actual detailed information for the villages of Southern India -- the same villages which had been described in the sources that Marx had used in 1853.

The physical configuration of the south Indian village lent credence to the theory of the closed and self-sufficient village system. The rigid and hierarchical social structuring of village life into numerous caste-occupational groups was reflected in the lay-out of the houses and streets within the village. The ordinary villages (excepting those lying in the irrigated areas which were necessarily cramped) were usually divided into detached hamlets. Each possessed an agraharam, or Brahmin street, another area reserved for high non-brahmin castes, and to the west of the village lay the paraicheri and shakkilicheri where the low castes of the paraiyans and shakkili lived. The latter castes would not be allowed to so much as walk down the upper-caste streets. Outside the village boundary lay the cultivated fields, the waste and unproductive lands, the pasture land, and the burning ground, different corners of which were allotted to the Brahmins, Sudras and the lowest castes.

3. See Karl Marx, On Colonialism, Moscow, 1963

New evidence on the village community points to the extremely complex nature of the internal structure of the village as it had developed by that time. In its framework of property relations the village presented an intricate combination of private and communal landholding rights. Private rights over the land were expressed in the individual's hereditary right to till a particular portion of land and also render the revenue assessed upon it. In the chapter on superior tenures in the Carnatic we have noted the widespread existence of various categories of superior right-holders who either cultivated or leased out their land to peasant cultivators. While they were usually not the recipients of the major share of the social surplus, they nevertheless formed a superior class controlling the affairs of the village, and enforcing the actual subordination of the other categories of village society like the poorer strata of peasants, village artisans and servants.

The Peasantry

The peasantry formed the main component of the village community. In the 18th century the peasantry was not a homogeneous body and property inequalities had made deep inroads into this strata. The evidence of the period, both qualitative, will testify to the differentiation that had taken place and was intensifying within the peasantry.

5

The peasant cultivator was called a paykari. There was a clear-cut distinction between two types of peasants- the ulkudi and the purakudi. The ulkudi was a resident paykari who enjoyed the right of cultivating the soil by prescription, and this right was a hereditary one. They could not be forced away from the village by the will of the mirasdar who had to assign ground for them. Their right however consisted in the use and not the substance of the soil, as they could not sell, mortgage or transfer their right. Their heirs succeeded, but in default of them, the land reverted to the mirasdar. The ulkudi having had a permanent interest in the soil, resided within the village bounds. Their customary varim or share of the produce (after the deduction of fees) was 45 per cent of the produce; from which amount they had to render a tundivaram (or landlords share) of another 5 per cent which left them with 40 per cent of the produce. In South Arcot district, in the

5. The word is from a compound Persian word, from 'pay', the foot, and Karidun, to labour, or kardun, to cultivate, signifying then a man who journey to his work or cultivation. The local name for cultivator was sukhavasi, a sojourner. See, Plase's Report on the Jaghire, 1799, para 189.

6. See Plase's Report on the Jaghire, 1799, op.cit., para 74, 189; and, Wallace's Report on Tanjore Ist May 1805 in Bayley and Huddleston, Paper's on Mirasi Right, p.96.

villages that comprised the Farm of Tiruvendipuram, the superior right holders were called the Nattara. The ulkudi here had to render a certain portion of their produce to them. This amounted to about 10 per cent payable in cash or grain on both irrigated and dry land after they had paid the sarkar share of the crop which ranged from 40-60 percent.⁷

We can cite at least one instance of the ulkudi cultivators moving up the socio-economic ladder and claiming mirasi rights. The village of Tandiarpet, in the Company's Jaghire, was a mirasi village, i.e., a village, the right of cultivating which, down to the year 1794, was in the hands of the mirasdars and their heirs who made the requisite payments to the government from their profits, and who also had the right to collect the various fees and perquisites from the village that had been customarily established. However, the right of cultivation had been vested in the hands of the resident (ulkudi) paykari, who in a later dispute with the mirasdars traced their claims over the lands they cultivated to a grant given to them by the government. They forcibly ejected the mirasdars from the village, claiming the mirasi

7. Report on Tiruvendipuram, 1775, paras 55-65.

for themselves. By virtue of their long standing hereditary right to cultivate certain plots or parcels of the village land, the outcome of the acrimonious dispute between the two parties which was eventually decided in the Supreme Court, was a ruling in favour of the naykari tenants.

The purakudi were the non-resident peasants of the village (comparable to the Paikash cultivator of the Mughal period). The purakudi generally only cultivated from year to year, having only a contingent interest in the soil which expired with the harvest. He usually came from an adjoining village where he held mirasi, and to supply the full agricultural stock necessary for the years cultivation. Seed grain, ploughing cattle, and the implements of husbandry were brought by him. They were therefore allowed to keep a larger share of the produce on the lands they cultivated, which usually came to 50 per cent. In Thanjavur the purakudi varam (or purakudi share) was nowhere less than 22 per cent of the gross produce, nor more than 30 per cent (this after they paid the mirasidars their tunduvaram or rent). If the purakudi

8. See Judgement of the Supreme Court in a Mirasi Claim, 26th Sept. 1808, in Bayley and Huddleston, Papers on Mirasi Right, 2d. ed., pp. 127-141.

9. Platts's Report, 1799, para 73 and 189 and Extract from Wallan's Report 1805, Bayley and Huddleston, Papers, p. 97.

10. Ibid., pp. 96-97.

20

received a higher proportion of the produce than 50 per cent, then it was under the sanction of specific agreements, like the culture of waste or very poor land.¹¹ The purakudis could¹² be ejected from the land at the pleasure of the mirasdar.

While the purakudi received a higher proportion of the net produce than the mirasdar, the latter was more than compensated for by his gereis and maniums. It was a frequent fraud for a man to enter his name in the village records twice, once as a paykari and then as a mirasdar, so that he reaped the advantages of both positions.¹³ That there were many villages that were cultivated only by paykaris is clear from the following figures that were compiled for Thanjavur. In 1805 there were 1012 villages that were cultivated directly by the mirasdars without the intervention of purakudis; there were 1898 villages cultivated by purakudis alone; and 1923 villages cultivated partly by mirasdars directly and partly by purakudis. The total purakudi population was estimated at about 47,312 by the same source, (nearly half the whole tenantry of the province) of which 28,323 (60 per cent) were

11. Placc's Report, in Land Tenures in the Jaghire, Fifth Report, ed. Firminger, Calcutta, 1917, Vol. III, p. 159.

12. Wallace's Report, 1805 in Bayley and Huddleston, Papers, p. 96.

13. Wallace's Report 1805, op.cit., p. 96.

67

engaged in the lands of Brahmin mirasdars and 18,989 (40 per cent) in the lands of non-Brahmin, 'sudra' mirasdars.¹⁴ It was noted by one of the Collectors of Thanjavur that while it would be expected that the 'wealthy master should bear the loss caused by any calamity which fell on the agricultural stock, in Thanjavur, the case was quite the reverse, with "the subsistence and chattels of the impoverished servant" (the purakudis) being destroyed. Here cultivation was dependent on "the rude, broken and fleeting materials of the lowest of mankind. The cattle, seed, and all implements of husbandry, are purchased and maintained by the purakudis alone ..."¹⁵

In Dindigul, according to ancient custom, the assessments on the peasantry depended on their status. The peasantry was classed under four categories: the Puttookut ryots were those who having a hereditary interest in the village, were considered the owners of the land. They paid the highest land-tax. The vellaveray ryots were those next in rank: they had no hereditary claims to the land and paid a lower tax than the puttookut ryots. The yervaddies or non-residentiary ryots paid yet a lower land-tax. The purakudis or newly established

14. Wallace's Report 1805, op.cit., p. 96.

15. Report of Mr. Harris on Tanjore, 1804, in Fifth Report, ed. Firminger, op.cit., Vol. III, p. 341.

ryots formed the lowest stratum of the peasantry and paid¹⁶ the lowest rate of tax.

While the leading feature of agriculture was individual peasant proprietorship, in times of distress, like when the rains failed, the peasants of the village would assemble together, and having determined the extent of land that could be cultivated from the amount of water in the tanks, mutually apportioned it out to each individual, according to the amount of paniai land possessed by him in the village. After the ^rcops had been out each peasant again returned to his¹⁷ lands.

Artisans, Craftsmen, And Village Servants

The traditional combination of domestic manufacture and agriculture made for a certain stability of the village community, its "self-sufficiency", as it were. Every village maintained a certain number of village official and craftsmen who fulfilled most of its needs. Each artisan was entitled to a certain fixed share out of the gross produce of each peasant's land. This being an insignificant amount

16. Extract from the Report of Mr. Parish, Collector of Dindigul, 24th April 1808, in Bayley and Huddleston, Papers..., 22.cit., p. 122.

17. See Land Tenures in the Carnatic, 1800, in Fifth Report ed. Firminger, 22.cit., Vol. III, p. 338.

and insufficient for the peasant's subsistence, he was also given a small amount of 'manium' or completely tax-free land. In parts of Tamilnadu and Karnataka these village functionaries used to be called Ayagara and the remuneration they received in kind was called 'aya' or 'ayam', meaning income.¹⁸ We have reproduced in an accompanying appendix the utilisation of village land and the very detailed breakdown of the remuneration of the various village artisans.

An eighteenth century writer described the functions of the various village functionaries as follows: "... men have assembled in communities for reciprocally administering to each others wants: 1. the Gond, Potail, Muccuddim or Mundil (as he is named in different languages) is the judge and magistrate; 2. the Curnum, Shanboag, or Putwaree, is the registrar; 3. the Taliary or Sthulwar and, 4. the totie, are severally the watchmen of the village and of the crops, 5. the Neergunttee distributes the water of the streams or reservoirs in just proportion to the several fields, 6. the Jotishee or Joshi, or astrologer, performs the essential service of announcing the seasons of seed-time and harvest, and the imaginary benefits of unfolding the lucky or unlucky days and hours for all the operations of farming, 7. the

18. See K.A.N. Sastri, Further Sources of the Vijayanagar Empire, Vol. III, Madras 1946, p. 310.

smith, and 8. the carpenter, frame the rude instruments of husbandry, and the ruder dwelling of the farmer; 9. the potter who fabricates the only utensils of the village, 10. the washerman keeps clean the few garments which are spun, and sometimes woven, in the family of the farmer, or purchased at the market, 11. the barber contributes to the cleanliness and assists in the toilet of the villagers, 12. the silver-smith, marking the approach of luxury, manufactures the simple ornaments with which they love to bedeck their wives and their daughters; and these twelve officers (Barra Bullo-wuttee, or Ayangadee), or requisite members of the community, receive the compensation of their labour, either in allotments of land from the corporate stock, or in fees, consisting of fixed proportions of the crop of every farmer in the village.²⁰"

²¹
An earlier source, also for the south of India lists the twelve functionaries of every village as 1. the accountant 2. headman 3. carpenter, 4. washerman 5. purohit 6. barber 7. shoemaker 8. goldsmith 12. potter "in each village the villagers offer to these officers as suited to their status

20. Mark Wilks, Historical Sketches of the South of India, 2d. ed., pp. 136-139.

21. From a 15th century source translated and cited in K.A.N. Sastri, Further Sources, 2d. ed., pp. 310-314.

two kinds of remuneration, buyam (income from land) and arthayam (income in cash) from the produce from the fields ... the ayakars possess manyan on which all of them excepting the purahita have to pay jodi".

As a certain level of social and economic differentiation had developed among the various categories of the village professionals and servants, it would not be out of place here to define each one's status and function from the data we have at hand. In all villages there existed a clear demarcation between two categories of village functionaries. On the one hand were the village officials, appointed by the government representative, whose offices were not initially hereditary but in fact must have later become so. The other category comprised the village artisans and servants, whose professions were hereditary and were tightly regulated by caste. Both groups were however essential to village functioning.

The report on the villages of the Tiruvendipuram Farm, (which we have already made reference to) written in 1775, takes note of the function of the Amuldar who was the sarkar superintendent in the group of twenty-six villages surveyed. He "transacted the business of government in them and collected the government share of the revenue." His office, not being a hereditary one, "he had no other allowance made to him but an annual stipend which was paid him by the Circar;

he also had to undertake the overall supervision of cultivation and the state of the irrigational sources in all the villages.²² Offices such as those of the Qanungo and Deshmukh were also prevalent in the Chingleput region in the 18th century.²³ From our evidence it is clear that these officials were remunerated jointly by the Sarkar and the cultivators. Although we are not sure of their exact functions, what can be said with certainty is that these offices were a later importation, introduced by the Bijapuri or Mughal administrations and absorbed by the existing structure.

The status of the Poligar varied widely over the different regions of the Carnatic. We have seen that in certain regions of the Carnatic, as for example in Tirunelveli and Rannad, the Poligars were of the rank of semi-independent chieftains. Our evidence from Chingleput and South Arcot suggest that while the Poligar claimed certain superior rights in the land, his overall social and economic standing was much lower than that of his counterpart in the southern districts. We have ranked this category of Poligar as a

22. Tiruvettimuram Report, 1775, op.cit., paras 14-15.
 23. From village surveys in the volumes comprising Barnard's Survey of the Jaghirs, 1765, Board of Revenue Miscellaneous Series, Vols. 71 and 72.

(3)

village functionary here as in addition to his claims and privileged, he had to discharge certain functions at the village level.

In the 26 villages comprising the farm of Tiruvendipuram, there was one Poligar and four watchers; their offices had become hereditary being the "descendants of those persons primarily appointed to these offices by the Country Government." His duties appear to have been to appoint Taliars to watch in twenty-six villages of the farm both by night and day at his own expense... one month before the paddy and small grains is fit for cutting in these villages, he is to provide Taliars to watch it, as also after it is cut and lies in the fields..."²⁴ Cwing to oppression and high taxation the peasants and artisans, during such periods, tended to desert villages.²⁵ The Poligar then acted as an agent of the revenue collecting authorities and supplied the musclepower to ensure that such desertions did not take place. The Report says...he is to prevent the husbandmen from quitting the villages themselves, or from driving away their working cattle, and

24. Report on Tiruvendipuram, 1776, op.cit., para 17.

25. In a letter to the Board of Revenue in 1774 on the Renters' oppression in the countryside the Collector of Chingleput observed that "In any dispute between the Renter and the cultivators, if a signal injury be intended the suffering party finds a secure asylum out of the district... Various instances occur where I have seen this matter exemplified, the renter soliciting the return of the cultivators and the manufacturers to their homes..." Revenue Proceedings: 247/17. India Office Library, pp. 209-210.

17

from taking away their instruments of husbandry." ²⁶ The Poligar was remunerated both by small shares out of the produce of each peasants land as well as by the assignment of inam lands in each village. In addition to this the Poligar was given five villages as "choutram", which was a grant of villages given by the sarkar at a favourable rent in this case the Poligar had to pay a fixed amount of Pag. 250 for all the five villages.

Every village had its accountant called Kanakapilli in some regions and Gurnum in others. The office of the Gurnum, "being that to which a distinct class of people is appointed, whose duty is to register the mirasdars or the proprietors of the village; to note down all changes among them; to attest all deeds of sale, transfer and assignment; and to keep an account of the cultivation and produce..." ²⁷ The Gurnum enjoyed a 'merai' on the gross produce (in the Jaghire the merai of the gurnum ranged from 5/24 to $1\frac{2}{3}$ upon the gross produce) and a manium of no definite extent but which depended on the degree of influence that he enjoyed. ²⁸

26. Tiruvendipuram Report, 1775, op.cit., para 17.

27. Extract from the Report of Mr. Place in Firminger ed. Fifth Report, 1812, op.cit., Vol. III, p. 151; See also Thurston Castes and Tribes of Southern India, Madras Govt. Press 1909, Vol. III, pp. 150-151.

28. Place's Report of 5th October 1795, Board of Revenue Consultations, para 39.

Although the curnums were not allowed to purchase any share of the village, in the Jaghire they had assumed such extensive property by the end of the 18th century, that it could only have been through the violation of this rule.

The shroff was an important member of the village establishment, particularly in Chingleput and South Arcot. The services of one shroff must have spread over several villages. His duty was to "sort, and examine all the money that is paid by the husbandmen for their rents, and he is likewise to keep it till it is demanded either by the renter or his Turphdar..."²⁹ He also acted as the village moneylender. The presence of the shroff and his position within the community would indicate the extent to which monetisation had penetrated the countryside, where the state's share of the produce was commuted into money instead of being collected in kind.

The construction and maintenance of the irrigation vuerces and the proper distribution of water in the village was a matter of prime concern both for the state and peasant; its upkeep therefore was a joint concern. The man in charge of the distribution of irrigation water was called the nirganti

Tiruvandipuram Report, 1776, op.cit., para 27.

69

or the toti, who in some villages was also the measurer of the village lands. The twenty-six villages of Tiruvendipuram had three totis assigned to them. The duty of the first was to measure all the lands, and the grain after it was trod out; the second toti had to "make a proper distribution of water from the water courses to the different cultivators", and the third had to "superintend the dams made by the renters in the rivers."³⁰ The totis were remunerated at a comparatively lower scale when compared to the accountant, the astrologer and the carpenter and smiths. In two of these villages there was another person called a mudaganulligy who was a kind of diver. "His duty is to go into the vary (tank) when it is filled with water and to stop with clay and other things all openings and crannies... he is at the same time to block up with bundles of straw the doors of the vary to prevent the water from unnecessarily passing out; and when necessity requires he is to remove these bundles of straw, and by the doors of the vary to give free passage to the water through the water courses."³¹

The carpenter and brass-smith held a central place among the village artisans as they were vitally linked to the production needs of the village. As avagars they received

30. Tiruvendipuram Report, 1775, op.cit., para 29-31.

31. Ibid., para 33.

their ayan and manya and had to "attend to all the artisans work in the village, especially to the manufacture of ploughs and other agricultural implements without demanding wages for their services."³² In South Arcot, the peasants were to furnish them with wood and iron to make the implements of agriculture, "and they are to work upon them being allowed by such husband-³³men as employ them half a measure of rice per day." All evidence points to the extremely low level of remuneration that these artisans received. An account of 1728 says that they had to "repair the plow, plow shears, or irons, wood and iron work for buildings and houses gratis and in return to be allowed a small share of each crop on the gleanings of paddy."³⁴

In Tamilnadu, the five most important professions of the Tattan (goldsmith), Kannan (brass-smith), Tac'chan (carpenter), Kal-Tac'chan (stone-mason) and Kollan or Kannan³⁵ (black-smith) were united in the Kammalas caste group. Thurston had written of the highly organised structure of this caste. Each of these five divisions had a nattanaikaran (headman), a Karyaathan (chief executive officer and other elected

32. See translation of 15th century source in K.A.N. Sastri, Further Sources of the Vijayanagar Empire, Vol. III, p.312.

33. Tiruvandipuram Report, 1775, op.cit., para 26.

34. Public Sundries, Vol. 106-B. Madras Record Office, p. 947.

35. E. Thurston, Castes and Tribes of the Madras Presidency, Vol. III, Madras, 1909, pp. 107-108.

members of the division. The five headmen in their turn elected the Aniivittu Nattanaikaran, or head of the five divisions.³⁶ There seems to have occurred a rise in the social status of the Kammalas during the 10th-13th centuries, due possibly to the decrees of rulers who used the Kammalas skill in building, carving and sculpting the massive temples that were built during that period under royal aegis.³⁷

The bonds of caste unity among the Kammalas were very strong. Abbe Carree wrote of their "inveterate habit that, if one of them is offended or wronged, all the others shut their shops and abandon work and business."³⁸ 16th century inscriptions also reveal the united action of the Kammalas³⁹ for the gaining of social privileges.

The other servants of the village included the potter, barber, washerman, cobbler and astrologer, and some villages had also a snake doctor, musicians, dancing girls etc. The status of the potter was much the same as that of the carpenter and smith. He was given a small amount in grain by the peasants

36. Ibid., Vol. III, pp. 108-1011.

37. See A.I. Chicherov, India, Economic Development in the 16th-18th Centuries..., pp. 32-33. Indeed by the time that Thurston wrote, the Kammalas were claiming Brahmin status and had accepted Brahminical gotras.

38. The Travels of Abbe Carree in India and the Near East 1672-1674, London, 1947-48, pp. 595-96.

39. Cited in Chicherov, Economic Development..., op.cit., pp. 33-36.

and enjoyed as well a small extent of inam land. In some regions, one or two potters would supply pots to all the villages in a particular locality, and would receive an ⁴⁰ ayan from every one of them. In South Arcot the washerman and barber enjoyed the same private and public privileges - each peasant gave them two markala of paddy yearly, and they received 1/2 marcal of grain from every Kani of land let out on rent. ⁴¹ The washerman, in addition to his ayan, also received ⁴² food from every family he serviced. The cobbler had "to furnish the husbandmen with the leather they may be in want of for their implements of husbandry and to make them sandals on both which account the husbandmen allow him some private consideration in grain." ⁴³ His public privileges were even less than that of the barber and washerman.

A feature which was peculiar to the nature of agrarian caste organisation in south India was the division and ranking of castes and occupational groups into divisions of the right-hand ('valangai') and left-hand ('idangai'). This division seems to have made its appearance roughly around 1000 A.D. (as recorded in epigraphic evidence) ⁴⁴ and continued

40. See inscription cited in K.A.N. Sastri, Further Sources, op.cit., p. 313.

41. Tiruvendipuram Report, 1775, op.cit., paras 11-12.

42. Cited in K.A.N. Sastri, Further Sources, op.cit., p. 317.

43. Report on Tiruvendipuram, 1775, op.cit., para 15.

44. See Brenda E.F. Beck, 'The Right-Left Division of South Indian Society', Journal of Asian Studies, Vol. XXIX, No. 4, August 1970, p. 779.

to exist till the 18th century when it took different form,
urban centres like Madras becoming the loci of conflict
between the two caste factions.⁴⁵

The right and left hand divide which appeared to be a
vertical division of castes along economic lines did not
always manifest itself in economic terms; it expressed itself,
very often, in what appears to be purely ritual dimensions,
like the prerogative of a particular division to carry certain
banners and emblems at festivals, or to take a procession
through particular streets.⁴⁶ The two detailed classifications
given of the various castes/occupational under the two
divisions are those given by Buchanan which he observed in
1801, and the one made out more recently by M. Srinivasa
Iyengar⁴⁷ (lists given in appendix). From these lists it is
not possible to discern what the rules governing the classifica-
tion could have been. It appears that peasant castes fell
under the right hand faction and that Brammins were exclude
from both groups. In a study of these groups in the Konku
(Coimbatore) region, Brenda Beck came to the conclusion that
the right hand bloc of castes were dominated by a body of rural

45. Treated at length in Love, Vestiges of Old Madras, Vol. II
p.25-29, 141-143 ; also see A. Appadorai, 'Right and Left
Hand Castes in South India', IESHR, Vol. XI, Nos. 2-3,
June-Sept. 1974, pp. 245-257.

46. See Love, Vestiges of Old Madras, op.cit. Vol. II, p. 25-26.

47. F. Buchanan, Journey, op.cit., Vol.III, P. 606.
List by Iyengar given in A. Appadorai, 'Right and Left
Hand Castes in South India', op.cit., p. 217.

non-Brahmin landlords (the Kayuntara of the Konku region) allied with whom were those castes economically dependent on the land, and who rendered the Kayuntara certain ritual services, groups whom she calls the 'generalists'; this in contrast to the 'specialists' who learned and practised particular skills and who were paid by the individual job, comprising the left hand division.⁴⁸ This clear crystallisation of the two groups into the rural(right)and urban (left) would surely be a later development when urban centres attracted rural artisans and other groups. The rise in the social and ritual status of the Kammalas, the traditional leaders of the left-hand group, due to the massive temple building activities of the 10th-11th centuries was accommodated the right and left-hand divide.

The two caste groupings which united between them different professions made for a certain unity amongst their members on issues relating to their joint concern in the villages; this being a feature in the 16th and 17th centuries, when the castes were predominantly rural based. Chola inscriptions for example, give interesting accounts of the resistance put up by the right and left hand groups against the oppression of the tax-collectors who were often Brahmins. One inscription of the period states that the 98 classes of the Idangai and

48. Brenda Beck, 'The Right Left Division of South Indian Society', QR-Sit., p. 780.

98 sections of the Valangai made a pact to defend themselves against the "oil pressers" and against Brahmin and Vallala landlords "who are backed up by government officials."⁴⁹ Another inscription from Thanjavur of the same period says that the Valangai and Idangai sections, rather than paying unjust grain taxes, migrated from that district. They declared that "because we of the whole country were not united in a body, we were unjustly (dealt with) ... Hereafter we shall pay what is just and in accordance with the yield of the crops and we shall not pay anything levied unlawfully."⁵⁰

The 17th century saw the growth of coastal urban centre to which a large number of these rural groups migrated; from then on we hear of violent conflicts between the two groups in these towns.

49. A.I. Chicherov, India, Economic Development ...
On-git., p. 34.

50. Ibid., p. 35.

The lowest sections of toilers in the village, the agricultural labourers and other menial castes were forced by the rigours of the caste system to remain in conditions of abject subordination, very often in conditions of slavery. We know from our evidence that these classes were essential for the maintenance of a system of agricultural production, and in terms of numbers, they formed a large segment of village society.⁵¹ The three classes of agricultural labourers in south India were the Pariars, Pallans (they were generally attached to the non-Brahmin landlords or peasant castes), and the Pallis who were generally a slave caste employed under the Brahmin proprietors. These three groups were of the lowest castes and lived in a separate section of the village called the cheriperi. Abbe' Carre' in the course of his travels observed that while the Pariars were the village poor who did the "lowest and hardest work", there was yet "a lower caste, the Cheriperes, who are much below the others, and dare not enter a house, and have no dwelling for themselves and their wives and children but under trees, a little way off in the country. They live like dogs, on all sorts of things, eating dead beasts and the filth of the town thrown into the gutters."⁵³

51. See Appendix No. 3 for the list of agricultural labouring families in each of the villages recorded.

52. See, Chingleput District Manual, Vol. I, pp. 212-213.

53. The Travels of the Abbe' Carre'..., p. 594.

Place, in his extensive observations and writings on the Jaghire in the 18th century, noted two kinds of agricultural labourers. The Pariars could acquire no property in the land, they received wages, partly in money and partly in grain called Cullavassum and had to renew their services every year. The labourer engaged himself at the beginning of every year on the customary terms of the village to which he belonged by the acceptance of betel from the cultivator. The amount⁵⁴ that he received was usually 2½ kalung of paddy every month. The other caste of servants were men of the palli caste, and "either by custom or rule have a hereditary right of service under the meerasdars, and are entitled to one-third of the share, which the latter receive of the crops; the meerasdars⁵⁵ in this case receive the cullavassum."

In Thanjavur, when cultivation was carried out by hired of the paraivar or pallar castes, it was called Pannel cultivation. Here they were also employed by purkudis when a large number of hired hands were needed on the occasions

54. Place's Report of 5th October 1795, para 36.

55. Ibid., para 75. Place also writes of the curious examples of the assertion of this hereditary right in a village called Madurantakam where the lands had remained uncultivated for years and the labouring population had dispersed. Once the Madurantakam tank was repaired, the descendents of many of these labouring families returned and once again claimed their 'inheritance' (vil, the right to labour in the fields).

56

of planting, weeding and reaping. It appears that the landlords bought and sold them like cattle and the price current at the end of the 18th century was 20 chuckrams or a little over Rs. 31 each.⁵⁷

While in a sense it would be correct to say that the village system sustained this class of labourers,⁵⁸ it may perhaps be more accurate to say that they in fact sustained the village system. In the case of other oppressed sections of the village society we do have evidence of the expressions of their discontent (see the reference to right and left hand caste protests in an earlier part of this chapter). The pariars and their counterparts in the villages, were so inextricably a part of the given socio-economic structure, and a corresponding system of rigid and traditional values which had weighed down upon them for centuries, that it is not surprising that our evidence nowhere indicates pariar protests or even defiance.⁵⁹

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56. Women were employed in transplanting and harvesting but were not allowed to weed the crop, "...from a rooted prejudice..." Plase's Report on the Jaghire, 1799, para 421.
57. Tanjore Commissioners Report, 1799, p.
58. Contemporary writers in fact commented on the benevolence of the system where the slave "fared better" than the hired labourer. See Chingleput District Manual, Vol. I, p. 213.
59. Interestingly enough, there was a custom (established by the landowning classes no doubt) among the pariar castes in Chingleput which illustrates how even the remotest possibility of disturbance was effectively rule out by
(Contd. on next page.....)

Apart from working as agricultural labourers, the three village menial castes of the watchman (taliari), vettiyan (grave-digger), and scavenger (toti) were also occupied by men⁶⁰ of the paraiyan caste. The various other occupations they followed were the beating of the village drums (the village crier), grooming horses, spinning cotton and weaving coarse cloth etc. The Chakkiliars were also a menial caste. They were the shoe-makers, leather dressers and tanners, and were⁶¹ considered to be of the very lowest status.

In many regions the agricultural labourers in a village were slaves attached to a particular land owning family, by whom they could be sold like beasts.⁶² Buchanan wrote of the "Panchum Bandun" (who comprised the four "tribes" of the Parriar, the Kaluan, the Sheeliar and the Toti) who were "by far the most hardy and laborious people of the country, but

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the source of custom and tradition. At the end of the revenue year, before new contracts were made, the entire body of labourers staged a mock strike and stood outside their village, shouting out their grievances against their employers, who had to cajole them with gifts, and promises to continue their fees and allowances only after which the pariars would return to work. The pariars would never carry their threats into execution "but after the usual time, everything having been conducted according to custom, return quietly to their labours." Chingleput District Manual, vol. I, pp. 212-213.

60. Thurston, Castes and Tribes...., Vol. VI, pp. 114-115.

61. Chingleput District Manual, Vol. I, pp. 202-03.

62. Place's Report 1792, para 79.

the greater part of them are slaves." Apparently Hyder Ali during his incursions induced a large number of them to settle in his country.⁶³ And 18th century Report on Tanjavur tells us that there occurred a great decrease in the slave population in this province after the war with Hyder Ali in 1781. The Report makes three pertinent points. First, that slave labour was largely employed for cultivation previous to 1781. Secondly, that a large proportion of the slave population was physically exterminated during the second Mysore War and many were drawn to other regions. This resulted, thirdly, in an intense demand for labour by the mirasdar and lands were leased to paikaris who were "paid in proportion to the fertility." The Report remarks that "being interested in the produce of the soil, the labour they (the paikars) perform is considered fully equal to that of double the number of slaves..." Here we have empirical evidence for a well recognised fact of economic history, that slave labour was always less efficient than peasant production, though it may yield a higher surplus per capita.⁶⁴

63. Buchanan, Travels..., Vol. I, p. 19.

64. Tanjore Commissioners Report, 1799, p. para 35

The Data From Surveys

An analysis of the data from village surveys taken
65
around 1765 yields interesting information on differentiation within the village; on the economic status of the various village artisans and village officials, the methods of their remuneration etc.

66
For our analysis, a sample of 21 villages has been chosen at random out of a very large number of villages in the Company's Jaghire, which had been surveyed by the British. Most of the villages chosen lay in the Jarangooly and Trippasore parganas of the Jaghire (corresponding to the present day district of Chingleput).

To begin with, it would be instructive to describe the type of information that the surveys give. The land of every village is divided into two: the area of habitation and other uncultivated lands; and the cultivated lands. All the cultivated (and cultivable) lands of the villages are broadly divided into 'wet' or irrigated land on which paddy was grown,

65. Barnard's Survey of the Jaghire 1795, Board of Revenue Miscellaneous Series, MRO, Vols 71 and 72.

66. Only in the case of seventeen villages are the data complete. The data from the other four villages have also been used, indicating omissions the result of damaged or illegible records.

and 'dry' or lands that depended on rain as their source of irrigation and on which the drier variety of grain were chiefly grown. The cultivable lands are divided, again, into those lands that were alienated and went towards maintaining the members of the village establishment; and the revenue-paying or 'Circar' lands from which a portion of the produce was rendered in cash or grain to the state or its agents in the form of land-tax. The 'village establishment' (or alienated) land, also called in the survey by the name of 'free-gift' lands, comprised the 'old' as well as the 'new', and the number of people as well as the extent of land that each village officer enjoyed is recorded in the survey. There was another category of free-gift; that which was the property of 'strangers', that is essentially, landholders residing outside the village. The data, while giving us the total extent of revenue-paying land do not however indicate how much land the landholders held. What has been given us in the surveys is the division (out of a hundred units) of the harvests on both dry and wet lands, amongst the various recipients i.e., the state, landholders, and village servants. The other very useful data the survey gives are those of the caste occupational breakdown of households within the village.

An analysis of the data from these village surveys provides us with very valuable insights into the village economy and the way it functioned.

In Appendix No. II a preliminary classification of
67
village lands has been attempted. The sizes of the villages
ranged from 47 kanis (one kani = 1.32 acres) to 911 kanis in
area; the smaller villages were probably attached to a larger
village and shared its men and resources, as was often the
case. In column 2 we have given the total extent of cultivable
lands, along with the division into 'wet' and 'dry'. In a
majority of the villages the wet lands accounted for over 50 per-
cent of the total cultivable area: if this sample can be taken
as representative of the surrounding regions, then it would
suggest that this was a fertile and fairly productive area.
It will also be noted (columns 5 and 6) that the majority
(over 2/3rds) of the villages were revenue-paying ones, such
lands accounting for over 60 per cent of the total cultivable
lands in each village. Four villages had been given in inam,
and in the cases of 3 of them, landholders from adjacent
villages or 'strangers' (as they are recorded in the survey)
held most of the lands. Even within each village the bulk of
the wet lands, i.e., the most productive of the cultivated
village lands paid the land-tax.

67. For the sake of continuity of the written arguments of
this chapter, all the tables have been put into the
appendices at the end.

In each village the revenue-paying or sarkar lands were cultivated by landowners or peasants (the 'farmer' category we presume, given in the survey), and the alienated or inam lands were cultivated by one of the four categories of village residents other than landholders, viz., i) the village professionals; ii) village officials, iii) charitable and religious establishments and iv) others. (see Appendix No. 4 for the list of members comprising each category). Since there is, given in the survey, the total number of landowning houses (the sum of columns 7 and 8) we have calculated the average extent of landholding per household. We have also calculated the average extent of landholdings per household on 'wet' lands alone. The average, no doubt can be misleading as it would considerably level out what we can assume to be the even greater inequality in the distribution of landed property amongst those who possessed lands. But it too has its uses. It will be seen from column 12 that the average extent of wet landholding extended from 3.42 to 34.37 ⁶⁸ kanis. More specifically, the breakdown of village wet landholdings was as follows:

<u>Average extent of wet landholdings</u>	<u>No. of villages</u>
3 - 5 <u>Kanis</u>	5
5 -10 "	6
10 -15 "	2
15 -20 "	2
20 -25 "	2
above-25 "	1

68. The data for village No. 8 is incomplete owing to damage of the record.

In Appendix No. III, the distribution and composition of the different individuals comprising the working population of the village (for the sake of completeness we have repeated the figures for the village 'landholders' and 'farmers' in this appendix) has been given. It will be noticed that the completeness or incompleteness of the village community was not dependent on the size of the village (the figures given in brackets under each village name is its total extent of cultivable lands). For example, village no. 4 in our list, Poodomauvelongey, by comparison with the rest, possessed a larger extent of cultivable land, but nevertheless did not have the artisans most central to the working of the village economy - the carpenter and the ironsmith. Colandalur (village no. 14) by contrast, although one-half the size of Poodomauvelongey appears to have been more self-sufficient, with a carpenter, iron-smith, washerman, cowkeeper, six agricultural labouring (pariar) families, and a weaver amongst others. This would also perhaps, suggest a greater inter-dependency among the villages within a given area. A group of two or more villages may have had to share their artisans (this is confirmed by some of the qualitative data on the period - see the previous section on the village artisans). In one of the villages there was a population of 22 weaving families: their services must certainly have extended to outside villages as well, or they could have been supplying woven

cloth to a nearby market. The penetration of market forces into the village must necessarily have changed its production relations.⁶⁹ Appendix No. IV shows the comparison between the state and the different categories of the village residents in the different 'shares'- the share of each category being expressed in terms of a percentage - of the produce in four villages from our sample. We have specified the occupation and/or caste of each of the individuals who comprised each category. In the remarks, we have also clarified that a 'share' was in each village, and who the 'cultivators' or 'landholders' were. We have taken the four villages of Juddapaukum, Poodaputtoo, Colandalur and Nelwoy. It will be seen that the cultivators percentage share of the net produce was higher wherever cultivation was difficult and required labour and other inputs. The four categories of village resident other than the cultivators (viz. the sum of columns D, E, F, and G) received not more than 30 per cent of the net produce put together.

While it is clear from the data that the percentage share of the net produce received by the cultivator often

69. This transformation was more clearly discernible in those areas where the East India Company established its control over the local handloom industry, as for example in some of the coastal weaving village in the Jaghire. For an interesting account of this process of transformation see S. Arasaratnam, 'Weavers, Merchants and Company: The Handloom industry in South-eastern India, 1750-1790', IJHR, Vol. XVII, No. 3, pp. 257-281.

exceeded that received by the State, this would in no way invalidate the thesis that the state and/or its agents were the major recipients of the social surplus. From the cultivators share of the net produce, various deductions that had to be made for seed, for repairs to implements, for the upkeep of cattle, for the payments to farm labourers etc. would have taken away at least another half of what the peasant received, leaving him with a very small margin of profit.

To sum up, the following points emerge from this analysis and discussion of the village data:

First, the bulk of the villages were revenue-paying, and in each village the best and most productive of the lands had to render the revenue to the state.

Secondly, this feature in no way ruled out the development of private, hereditary landlordism, which while in its pure form extended to the alienated or panigam lands, was also unmistakably prevalent on the sarker lands as well.

Thirdly, village society was highly stratified both socially and economically: the majority of the villagers lived in poverty and very close to the subsistence line.

Fourthly, the villages (at least in this area and period) were characterised less by their isolation or self-sufficiency, and more by their inter-dependency; we see the

evidence less of a 'natural' and more of a 'money' economy.

Lastly, the State remained the major expropriator of the social surplus.

The whole pattern of land and income distribution points to the extreme iniquitousness of village organisation. Far from there existing any kind of 'communality' in village life, it is clear that the village was held together as a unit and controlled by the privileged landed sections of the village society. While our evidence does not allow us to determine the subsistence level, from the great differences in economic status between the privileged groups on the one hand and the artisans and lesser village functionaries on (like the water-woman whose example we took) on the other, the latter sections needs may have been barely fulfilled by the remuneration they received. Many of the village marginal workers must have had to perform other tasks, or sell themselves as slaves to survive. The privileged classes were thus able to both control the village 'community' as well as enforce its actual subordination.

Appendix No. I

Distribution of Land and Its Produce in Cusbah Arsoor Nuttam in Ponnary Purgunnah in September 1784 according to the Village Records. *

Total Area: The Cusbah Arsoor Nuttam contains eleven thousand four hundred guntahs, each guntah one pole square, each pole thirty six adagooles.

Details of uncultivated land

Purpose assigned: Peramboke (or village waste lands)

For six pagodas (temples)	60
For six small tanks	60
For one large tank	2,020
For tope	130
For taddy(?) tope	80
For sixteen wells	80
For burning place	32
For place to beat out the paddy	100
For waste ground	200
	<hr/>
Total	2732
	<hr/>
Total available for cultivation	8268

Deduct for village Maniam (tax-free lands):

For the village temples	190
For inheritors of the Village	250
For Davadahee	70

* Source: IOR, Jaghire Book 1784.

For Poligar	630
For Conicoply (accountant)	180
For Talliar	130
For School Master	40
For the village of Sambitt on account of the borders	50
For the village Brahmin	20
For Dancing Girls	50
For Malabar Slaves	60
For Singer of Praises	24
For Carpenter	5
For Iron-smith	5
For barber and Washerman	10
For Hanneer Begum who formerly made a taneer pandal (water shelter)	70
For two of the village Brahmins	195
For the village doctor	40

Sunoud Maniums

Carpenter and Ironsmith	15
For Venkatachallu Mudali and his horse	50

Total <u>Maniums</u>	2104
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<u>Remaining Sarkar Ground</u>	6164
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The Distribution of the Crop: The manner of deciding the
crop fixed at one hundred cullums for one hundred ruzahs

Total Crop 100

A. Out of which is to be deducted for under
mentioned purposes with straw

For Carpenter	1
For Ironsmith	1
For Washerman	1
For Barber	1
For Panechevan	1
	<hr/>
Remains	5
	<hr/>

B. Out of which is to be deducted
with straw for the undermen-
tioned purposes

For Carpenter	0.12
For Ironsmith	0.12
For Washerman	0.3
For Wochwan	0.3
For Snake doctor	0.3
For Combah Cooty	0.3
For Water Woman	0.2
For Toty	<u>0.6</u>
	<u>1.11</u>
Remains	<u>98.89</u>

C. Out of which is to be deducted with
straw for the undermentioned charities:

For Ishvarah Pagoda	0.2.
For Permall Pagoda	0.2 $\frac{1}{2}$
For Pillar Pagoda	0.2 $\frac{1}{2}$
For Illamah, an Image	0.1 $\frac{1}{2}$
For Calendar Braminy	0.1 $\frac{1}{2}$
For Durma Raja	0.1 $\frac{1}{2}$
For Tannee Pandal	0.2 $\frac{1}{2}$
For School Master	0.1 $\frac{1}{2}$
For Flower Gardener	0.1 $\frac{1}{2}$
For Tom Tom and Co.	0.2 $\frac{1}{2}$
For Barber	0.1 $\frac{1}{2}$
For Panechavan	0.1 $\frac{1}{2}$
For Cow-keeper	0.1 $\frac{1}{2}$
For Vallavan	0.1 $\frac{1}{2}$
For Combah cooty	0.1 $\frac{1}{2}$
	<hr/>
	1.11 $\frac{1}{2}$
Remainder	91.1 $\frac{1}{2}$
	<hr/>

D. Out of which is to be deducted for the
servants for gleanings: 0.10

Remainder 90.3 $\frac{1}{2}$

E. Out of which is to be deducted at the 0.2 $\frac{3}{4}$
time of winnowing for the Valluvan
Remainder 90. $\frac{1}{2}$

F. Out of which is to be deducted at the time of dividing the crop for charities:

For Shvarah Pagoda	0.2½
For Permall Pagoda	0.2½
For Pillar Pagoda	0.1 1/8
For Jaina Image	0.1 1/8
For School Master	0.1 1/8
For Calender Braminee	0.1 1/8
For Tannee Pandal	0.2½
For Barber	0.1 1/8
For Washerman	0.1 1/8
For Paneshevan	0.1 1/8
For Flower gardener	0.1 1/8
For Moehen	0.1 1/8
For Water-Woman	0.1 1/8
For Snake Doctor	0.1 1/8
For Tom-Tom people	0.2½
For Durma Raja	0.1 1/8
For Combah Cooty	0.1 1/8
For Yellamah	0.1 1/8
For Talliar	0.2½
For Lamps of the Pagoda	0.2½
For Toty	0.4½
	<hr/>
	2.9½
Reminder	87.2½
	<hr/>

G. Out of which is to be deducted by	
the inhabitants for the servants	2.10
Remainder	<u>84.4</u>

H. Out of which is to be deducted for	
the undermentioned purposes	
For Conicopies	1.4
For Coopah Toom (?)	0.8
For Taliar	<u>2.0</u>
	4.0
Remainder	<u>80.4</u>

I. Out of which is to be deducted for	
Tank Marah	3.4 1/8
Remainder	<u>77.5/8</u>

To be divided in the following manner between the sarkar and the inhabitants:

1. At the rate of 4 cullums for 10 cullums for the inhabitants called inheritors for six months beginning in June.
2. At the rate of 3 cullums for 10 cullums for the inhabitants called inheritors for six months beginning in December.
3. At the rate of five cullums for 10 cullums for the strangers and conicopies of the said village for the whole 12 months.

Further, To be deducted out of the circar share for the under-mentioned purposes:

For Carriah Kistna Swami	0.4
For Paal Esavarah Swami	0.4
For Seneersah Charloo	0.4
For Qanungo	0.8
For Deshmook	1.4
For Peerjaddah	0.4
For Conicopli of the village	1.9
For Talia	0.2 $\frac{1}{2}$
	<hr/>
	5.10 $\frac{1}{2}$
	<hr/>

This village statement has been reproduced here in its entirety, i.e., with the very detailed breakdown of the utilisation of village lands; the distribution of maniums (or tax-free lands) among the various categories of village inhabitants; and also the share of each category in the total village harvest: shares which were established by 'namool' or custom, and which extended to every section of the village working populace. On the face of it this may suggest - erroneously - a well-integrated village community, where each worker (even one so insignificant as the village dancing girl) had a definite role and place in the overall scheme of things, and was ensured of a livelihood well suited to the services he/she

performed. Such a vision surely disregards many of the complexities - and indeed, from a closer study of this and similar village level data, the harshness - of village life. In the case of Gusbah Arsoor Nattam, out of the total extent of manium lands (2104 guntahs), 74.85 per cent was cornered by privileged individuals or institutions of the village: in this case, the Poligar, the accountant, the village 'inheritors' (landowners), the village temples, and two village brahmins. The remaining 25 per cent was shared by all the other categories put together. The survey also shows the shares due to different village residents out of every hundred cullums of the total harvest (the figures state that one guntah of cultivated land yields one cullum of grain - no doubt a hypothetical figure). If we take the example of the water-woman, we see that she gets 0.31 per cent of the total harvest i.e. 19 cullums totally, an extremely insignificant amount when compared to the village temples which together get 1.13 per cent of the total harvest or 68.57 cullums in each harvest; this in addition to the lands they held as manium. After the various deductions were made from the gross produce, 77 percent remained to be divided between the landowners and the sarkar.

S. No.	VILLAGE NAME	Cultivable Land in Rante	of wet land	of dry land	of wet land to total	Total or revenue paying land	of wet land	of dry land	wet to total revenue paying land	HOLDERS (ALLIATED) LAND held by residents of the village	LAND held by out-siders	pay tax to be quit with village land
		3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1.	VENGUL	776.00	412.24	363.75	53.12	699.93	354.93	345.00	50.7	66.35	10.25	90
2.	MUPPADE	911.00	410.00	501.00	45.00	773.75	317.25	456.50	69.49	129.00	8.25	84
3.	VEDAVUL	563.50	318.50	245.00	56.58	460.00	265.50	194.50	57.71	90.75	12.75	81
4.	PODDAMUVELONGEY	415.75	188.75	227.00	45.39	342.25	138.75	203.50	40.54	73.50	-	82
5.	AGHAROM	386.75	305.00	81.75	78.86	323.00	250.75	72.25	77.63	63.75	-	83
6.	MAGANIEM	306.00	229.50	76.50	75.00	269.25	202.25	67.00	75.11	35.75	1.00	87
7.	COVODDOOR	301.49	212.37	89.12	70.44	247.62	172.75	74.87	69.76	52.12	1.75	82
8.	PODDAPATNAM	224.00	120.00	104.00	53.57	207.50	108.00	99.50	52.04	16.50	-	92
9.	CUDDAPAKUN	540.00	237.80	303.00	43.88	202.50	112.50	90.00	55.55	111.00	226.50	37
10.	PODDAPUTOO	258.00	123.00	135.00	47.67	195.75	97.75	98.00	49.93	62.25	-	73
11.	CHURUGATTUOR	284.25	208.00	76.25	73.17	188.25	137.00	51.25	72.77	90.50	5.50	66
12.	MOGHYOR	199.75	-	-	-	146.25	-	-	-	50.50	3.50	73
13.	MELVOT(1)	166.25	90.75	75.50	54.58	129.50	68.75	60.75	53.08	36.75	-	77
14.	COLAVADUR	298.87	256.00	42.87	85.65	216.62	180.75	35.87	83.44	75.75	6.50	72
15.	MERDAIRY(1)	73.00	27.50	45.50	37.67	53.50	15.50	38.00	28.97	19.00	0.50	72
16.	MELVOT(2)	86.62	39.87	46.75	46.02	44.87	26.87	18.00	59.88	33.75	8.00	51
17.	MERDAIRY(2)	56.50	28.25	28.25	50.00	39.75	19.00	20.75	47.79	16.75	-	70
18.	MERDAIRY(3)	50.50	26.50	24.00	52.47	30.00	15.00	15.00	50.00	20.50	-	60
19.	AUTECOLATUOR	127.00	100.00	27.00	78.74	37.00	61.25	19.00	76.56	38.25	51.75	29
20.	TIROOVARCOVIL	47.75	40.25	7.50	84.29	24.50	21.00	3.50	85.71	23.25	-	51
21.	ANNACUTTOO	271.75	240.00	31.75	88.31	185.00	158.25	-	85.54	76.25	10.50	66

(Bibliography and sample study of 20 villages in the Jachire for 1964)

Village (Vill- age-name)	Chetty (Merchant)	Carpenter	Ironsmith	Washerman	Barber	Paintman	House- holder	Parake (agave) leaf	Paper	Oilman	Panduram (Hem- brahm)	Yalavakar	Weaver	Shroff	Pollgar	Mutram	Goldsmith	Moorman	Pally	Water pandal	Colladdy	Corn meter	Padri	Tookey	Tandun	Cover	Kannavar (artisan)	Cotton reformer	Plasman	Bhuttovan	Valluvan	Veehan	Potmaker	Vandavil Vallavar	Woodcutters	Total no. of houses in each vill- age	Total number of land- owning houses in each vill- age	Average extent of 'vet' land holding house- hold
2	4	8	2	2	2	1	•	20	1	1	2	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	15	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	2	1	•	•	1	1	•	94	28	11.33	
3	3	3	2	2	1	1	•	17	3	3	3	1	20	1	1	•	•	•	15	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	1	•	•	•	•	•	107	32	8.29	
1	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	8	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	2	•	•	8	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	1	•	•	52	32	4.33	
3	2	1	1	1	1	•	7	•	•	•	2	•	•	•	•	1	•	•	11	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	38	16	13.67	
3	1	4	1	1	2	•	3	•	•	•	•	•	•	1	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	5	•	•	83	59	3.42	
4	1	•	•	1	1	•	10	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	73	28	6.16	
•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	1	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	17	1	•	
7	5	1	•	•	•	•	7	•	•	•	2	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	102	7	16.07	
1	3	1	1	1	1	•	10	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	24	4	24.43	
3	•	1	1	1	1	1	11	•	•	•	1	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	54	14	9.78	
1	•	•	•	•	•	•	9	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	42	22	•	
•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	19	2	34.37	
•	1	1	1	1	•	•	6	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	30	9	20.08	

CULTIVATOR'S SHARE ¹	VILLAGE PROFESSIONALS SHARE	VILLAGE OFFICIALS SHARE	SHARE OF RELIGIOUS & CHARITABLE ESTABLISHMENT & THOSE CONNECTED WITH THEM	OTHERS ²	TOTAL OF COL. D.E.F.G.	REMARKS

8.62	9.89	8.93	2.16	6.59	27.57	1st Share is on wet lands watered by springs throughout the year. Cultivators are the vellala landlords of another village and teddy-seller landholders of this village. 2nd Share is on dry grounds through the year. Cultivators are the same.
6.35	9.89	8.93	2.16	6.59	27.57	

9.03	8.53	10.32	2.68	6.78	28.31	1st Share is on wet lands watered from the vary by channels throughout the year. Cultivators are vellala landholders. 2nd share is on dry grounds throughout the year. Cultivators are the same 3rd share is on wet lands that are watered by wells throughout the year. Landholders are the same.
6.84	8.53	10.32	2.68	6.78	28.31	
2.06	8.53	10.32	2.68	6.78	28.31	

10.84	15.21	8.54	4.89	2.62	31.26	1st Share is on wet lands watered by channels from the tank and by piketas for 6 months. Cultivators are vellala landholders, strangers of this village and other villages. 2nd share is for the second six months.
34.03	15.21	8.54	4.89	2.62	31.26	

37.94	10.03	10.10	1.85	1.55	23.53	1st Share is from wet lands watered by channels from the vary throughout the year. Cultivators are both resident and non-resident farmers. 2nd share is in paddy grounds watered by channels from the vary for the chief inhabitant of the district.
45.53	10.03	10.10	1.85	1.55	23.53	

The Right and Left Hand Caste Division in the Carnatic

There are two classifications of the right and left hand caste divisions, one given by Buchanan who observed the phenomenon in the region of Mysore in the 18th century, and the other compiled more recently by A. Srinivasa Iyengar. The two lists have been reproduced below.¹

Buchanan's List

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Right Hand</u>	<u>Left Hand</u>
I Traders	1) <u>Kanajigaru</u> : (traders of different religions) 2) <u>Jotighana</u> (oil makers who use one bullock in their mills) 3) <u>Madaru</u> : (a muslim trader with whom stands all the artificers of the same religion) 4) Gujarati merchants 5) <u>Sainatigaru</u> : (or persons actually of the Vaisya caste,	1. <u>Sheri chitay</u> (merchants who pretend to be of the Vaisya Caste, 2. <u>Kanajigaru</u> : oil-makers who use two oxen in their mill. 3. <u>Gollu or Gollawalla</u> : those who transport money.
II Weavers	6) <u>Curabaru</u> : blanket weavers also shepherds and cultivators. 7) <u>Padma Shalyvaru</u> : a type of weaver	4. <u>Devanga</u>
III Artisans	8) <u>Chubar</u> : potters 9) <u>Mungaru</u> : calico printers and tailors.	5. <u>Anchala</u> : further divided into i) <u>Subinadaya</u> or blacksmiths ii) <u>badila</u> carpenters iii) <u>Curavaru</u> coppersmiths iv) <u>Suladiga</u> , iron v) <u>Axala</u> gold and silversmiths

¹ See Buchanan, Journey, ... Vol. III, p. 606; and A. Appadornai, Right and Left Hand Castes in South India, 1961, Vol. II, nos. 2-5, June-Sept. 1974, p. 217.

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Right Hand</u>	<u>Left Hand</u>
IV Leatherworkers	-	6. <u>Nadigaru</u>
V Field Labourers, 10) cultivators	<u>Nadigaru</u> (cultivators of the Sudra) 11) <u>Whalliaru</u> : equivalent to the pariahs of Tamil Nadu.	7. <u>Paliyanlu</u> and 8. <u>Palayanlu</u> both cultivating castes of non-mysorean origin
VI Miscellaneous	12) <u>Goallaru</u> : keeper of cows and buffaloes 13) <u>Maindaru</u> : barbers 14) <u>Bista</u> : Palankeen bearers 15) <u>Amasaru</u> : washermen 16) <u>Jainaru</u> : worshipers of Jaina 17) <u>Uparu</u> : The people who dig tanks and build walls 18) <u>Chitrageru</u> : Painters	9. <u>Baydaru</u>

LIST COMPILED BY M. SRINIVASA IYENGAR

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Right Hand</u>	<u>Left Hand</u>
Traders	<u>Baliga</u> <u>Manaliga</u> <u>Komati</u> <u>Vellan chetti</u>	<u>Berri Chetti</u> <u>Vanivans</u> (who yolk two bullocks)
Weavers	<u>Jandra</u> <u>Velivan</u> <u>Senivan</u>	<u>Devanga</u> <u>Kaikolan</u>
Artisans	Nil	<u>Kannalan</u> <u>Kansalan</u> <u>Panohalar</u>
Leather workers	<u>Nadiga</u> or <u>Chakkilvan</u> (females)	<u>Chakkilyan</u> (males)
Field labourers and soldiers	<u>Kalaiman</u> , <u>Nattaman</u> <u>Palli</u> (females) <u>Vedan</u> or <u>Vettuvan</u> <u>Paraiyan</u> , <u>Jala</u> and <u>Moleva</u> .	<u>Jedar</u> , <u>Palli</u> (males), <u>Pallan</u>

There are many other variations in the caste groupings although all of them exclude Brahmins.

The origins of the idangai-valangai division is obscure and is shrouded in myth. According to one version it arose out of a dispute between the Kannalas (the caste group comprising the five most important artisan groups) and the vellalas (a non-brahmin upper caste usually landlords). Each caste claimed the other as its jati-pillaigal or caste dependents. The fight grew so fierce that the Chola king summoned both parties and enquired into their claims. The Kannalas and their followers stood on the left hand side of the king; and the vellalas and their allies on the right. The king is said to have ruled against the Kannalas who then dispersed in all directions. Yet another story connected with the origin of the division concerns two groups of weavers, the kaikolam and the alivans. They trace their presence in Tanchipuram to the time of Karikala chola. The tradition is that Karikala chola divided the two parties and assigned 96 tribes to each, appropriating to their use certain definite flages and musical instruments for festivals and funerals. This distinction, which was first established to prevent disturbances, became for the next several centuries a source of constant tension.

CHAPTER - IV

THE STRUCTURE OF SUPERIOR RIGHTS

The hereditary right of an individual or a group of individuals to a major share of the agricultural produce can be traced to a very early period in south India.¹

The Mirasi Right

In the 18th century Carnatic the mirasi right was a widely prevalent form of a second-level category (in that they were not the chief beneficiaries of the social surplus) of superior rights. In villages where the mirasidars held rights, they formed powerful centres of social control, and were very often linked to each other and to the poorer land-owning strata through ties of kinship and caste. Every successive revenue collecting administration had to come to terms with this section while making land revenue arrangements. In their search for the 'owner of the soil',

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1. In a series of very instructive articles, Karashima has traced the development of private landholdings in the lower Kaveri delta in the late Chola period through the study of inscriptional land grants. Karashima's contention is that in the early Chola period, land was held and cultivated communally in non-Brahmin villages, but that in the Brahmadeyas or Brahmin dominated villages individual landlordism had developed. However, by the late Chola period, individual landlordism had begun developing in non-Brahmin villages as well, as a number of non-Brahmin landlords began acquiring hereditary rights over the land. See, N. Karashima, 'The Prevalence of Private Landowning in the Lower Kaveri Valley in the Late Chola Period and its historical implications' in Studies in Socio-Cultural Change in Rural Villages in Tiruchirappalli District, Tamilnadu, India, No. 1, Institute for the Study of Languages and Culture of Asia and Africa, Tokyo, 1980.

British administrators from the end of the 18th century began making investigations into the origin and nature of the mirasi right, as they saw that any attempt to introduce land settlements came into conflict with the established, and extensive hereditary rights of the traditional mirasdars. Their debates, notes, survey and memoranda fill volumes and are of inestimable value for any study of agrarian relationships of the 18th century.²

The Origin and Nature of Mirasi Right

Although the word Miras is of Persian origin and means 'inheritance', there are indigenous terms of earlier origin which signify the same sets of right and obligations as mirasi-kani-atchi in Tamil and swastium in Sanskrit.³ The origins of mirasi have been traced to the early settlements of the region called Tondaimandalam (the present day districts of north and south Arcot, Chingleput and part of Trichinopoly) Velala cultivators of the modaly caste who were given kaniatchi

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2. For example see The Fifth Report from the Select Committee OF THE House of Commons on the Affairs of the East India Company 28th July 1812, (henceforth Fifth Report), British Parliamentary Papers Colonies East India, Irish University Press, 1969, pp. 77-166; Plaza's Report on the Jaghire, 1799 (henceforth Plaza's Report), Board of Revenue (Misc.) Proceedings, Vol. 48; Ellis, Replies to Seventeen Questions Proposed by the Government of Fort St. George Relative to Mirasi Right (henceforth Ellis' Replies), Madras Record Office (MRO), Madras, 1818; Bayley and Huddleston Papers on Mirasi Right (henceforth Papers), MRO, Madras, 1818.
 3. See Fifth Report in British Parliamentary Papers, ed. Firminger, Vol. III, p. 346; also Bayley and Huddleston, Papers..., pp. 34-35.

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rights in the lands they cleared for cultivation. The vellalas enjoyed a monopoly of privileges as of rank and they initially formed the sole proprietary body. The acquisition of mirasi by brahmins seems to have been a later development and was more particularly confined to the Thanjavur region. Although it was found that the decisive traces of the mirasi right survived in Chingleput and North and South Arcot, it was also noticed that mirasi villages must have existed in Nellore as well as features of it survived into the early 19th century.⁵ Kaniatchi rights later came to be held by brahmins, reedis, shanars, pallars etc.

The debate as to the nature of the mirasi right seemed to have revolved around the question of the mirasidars absolute property in the soil. Here two of the main authorities on the subject held contrary views. Ellis, who was Collector of Chingleput district around 1814, and an authority on landed tenures drew the analogy between the pre-feudal ladium in Europe and mirasi, while Place, the Collector of the same

4. Tradition attributes the conferring of the Kaniatchy on 300,000 vellala cultivators by the reigning Chola King Adondei Chakravarti. See Ellis Replies, op.cit., para 6. Baden-Powell connects the vellala cultivators to the Kunbi or Kurmi cultivators of Central India and Bombay Baden-Powell, Land Systems of British India, Oxford, 1892. Vol. III, pp. 112-113.

5. Ibid., Vol. III, pp. 112-113.

11

district around the end of the 18th century maintained that "~~meerasas~~ (is) a free estate of inheritance and the mirasdar a tenant in fee simple, holding of a superior lord, on condition of rendering him service. His lord is the Circar, his estate the usufructuary right of the soil, and the service he owes a render of a stated portion of the produce of his labour." What many of these administrators recognised and recorded but could not seem to fit into their Europe-centred notions of property rights was that in south India (and most likely in other parts of India as well) private and communal land rights could exist together; and that therefore it was not surprising that mirasi accomodated an entire gamut of rights over land; claims over village offices like the village accountants; rights to certain portions of land tax-free for all village artisans etc; all of which functioned within the frame-work of the caste system. This by no means suggests that all relations of production in the countryside fell within the parameters of the mirasi system. Many village were non-mirasi in nature and here other forms of superior rights were in existence. Thus, the mirasi right as it was seen to exist in the 18th century Carnatic, broadly can be said to have covered a range of agrarian rights, which while differing in their specificities from region to region, was always the

6. See Place's Report, 1799, op.cit., para 91.

same in essence, being connected with the proprietary possession on usufruct of the soil.

There were four main distinguishing features of the mirasi right and we shall discuss each one separately. These were that 1) It covered an entire range of rights, dues claims and privileges over the land and its produce which were both hereditary and proprietary. 2) it often expressed itself as a joint proprietary right among several mirasars who were generally of the same caste, 3) it could be gifted, sold or mortgaged, 4) it was closely linked to the institution of caste which often determined the extent of privileges a mirasdar enjoyed.

1) The Mirasars Hereditary Claims Over the Land And Its Produce:

18th century surveys show that the lands of a village were generally divided into two parts - the Sarkar or varaset lands upon which the land tax was levied and had to be paid by the cultivator/landlord, and the manvam or inam lands which were granted for specific purposes (for example to the village artisans, to temples or to a particular individual) and which were exempt from land tax. In mirasi villages the sarkar

7. See, for example, Barnard's Survey of the Jachire, 1766 (henceforth Barnard's Survey) in the Board of Revenue Miscellaneous series (henceforth B of R misc.) MO;

could not overlook the hereditary right of the mirasdar to cultivate the varanet lands, so long as the mirasdar paid the melvaram or the governments share. The mirasdar's share of the produce ranged from 45 to 60 per cent, depending upon the risks of cultivation involved. In situations where the mirasdar did not personally cultivate the land, he leased it out to tenant cultivators called paykaries and received from them the landlord's rent called tunduvaram which was generally 5 per cent of the cultivator's share (called kudivaram) after the melvaram was paid. In Thanjavur, under the Marathas the kudivaram fell to 40 per cent of the produce, out of which the mirasdar's claimed between 20 and 25 per cent (of kudivaram) as tunduvaram. Under the Company's administration the kudivaram varied between 50 and 60 per cent out of which the mirasdar received between 23½ to 26½ per cent as tunduvaram.⁹

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Place's Report, 1799, op.cit., with appendices; Report on the Farm of Tiruvendipuram, 1775 (henceforth Tiruvendipuram Report), MCO Library ASO(D) Vol. 56; Report on the Farm of Devacottah, 1772, Revenue Consultation, 1776, MCO.

8. Place's Report, 1779, op.cit., paras, 195-99.
9. Harris' Report on Tanjore 9th May 1804 in Bayley and Huddleston, Papers, op.cit., p. 87.

Secondly, the mirasidars were entitled to certain perquisites variously called avatantruma, knopatum or perela which were deducted from the gross produce before the sarkar share was deducted. For example, in the village of Tandiarpet in the Jaghire, where the mirasidars were of the nel-vellala caste, apart from the tunduvaram and manium (tax-free lands) which the mirasidars enjoyed they were also entitled to the following perquisites: i) the galapady which was a small proportion of the harvest from the lands in the hands of payearries, for which the person who used to collect it on their behalf used to furnish them with betel-nut ii) to a small money payment with a daily portion of fish from the fisherman in consideration of the houses occupied by them and iii) to a minor¹⁰ perquisite with respect to salt from the village salt pans. Finally, the mirasidars had certain manium lands which were completely exempted from tax. Mirasi right also extended over waste land but was limited by the nature of the waste. The cultivable wastes or seval carambu, the mirasdar held as he did the varanet lands, but over the immemorial waste or anadi carambu, they did not have cultivating rights but

10. See Judgement of the Supreme Court in a mirasi claim to the village of Tandiarpettai, Sept. 26th 1908, (henceforth Judgement Supreme Court) in Bayley and Huddleston, Papers, p. 133. In South Arcot district, the mirasidars possessed the right to levy produce fees for their sole use from the various cultivators of paniel lands in the village, they enjoyed the produce of fruit trees within the village, and fresh fish from tanks in their mirasia. See, Extracts from C. Hyde, on ancient landed tenures in Selections from Old Records of South Arcot, Collectorate Press, South Arcot, 1904, pp. 4-5.

11

could cut firewood, work quarries, etc.

Joint Proprietary Holdings

A distinguishing feature of landed mirasi was the division of all village lands in shares or lots among the various village mirasdars.¹² This has been taken as sufficient evidence of the remnants of tribal equality, where land was divided and exchange practised.¹³ However, it is clear that any 'equality' if it did exist was confined to within the group of mirasdars, and did not exist in relation to the rest of the village. It is more likely that joint ownership existed in those regions where natural conditions required the pooling of the resources of the mirasdars. From a reading of contemporary sources we note that the identification of the mirasdar was not with a particular extent of land but with so many shares or fractional parts of a share in the village mirasi. In mirasi saledeeds, the rights to be alienated were always in conjunction with a share of fractional part thereof.¹⁴

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11. See, the second question on mirasi right in Ellis' Replies, op.cit.; also, in Sancarayas Replies to the 17 Questions on Mirasi Right (henceforth Sancarayas Replies), B of R (Misc.), Vol. 231, MRO, see reply to the second question.
 12. Placc's Report 1799, op.cit., para 69; also see Baden-Powell, Land Systems of British India, Vol. III, p. 109.
 13. Ibid., Vol. III, p. 113.
 14. See, Appendix to Ellis' Replies, op.cit., Vol. 231.

It was estimated that at the end of the 18th century in the Jaghire, the cultivated lands were divided into 17,821 $\frac{7}{8}$ shares, that the number of mirasdars was 8337 who held 15664 $\frac{9}{10}$ (or nearly 80 percent) of those shares and that the remainder or 1327 shares were unclaimed, but occupied by paykaria.¹⁵ This would indicate the fairly extensive spread of mirasi. As further illustration of the division into shares of the village mirasi land, in the 18th century, Place took two villages in the Jaghire. In the village of Polatoor, according to the village records, the lands were originally divided into four shares and held by four mirasdars. In course of time the number of mirasdars increased to thirty, but the original number of shares into four were preserved, each mirasdar owing a fractional part of a share. In contrast to Polatoor, stood the village of Damerlah which was divided into 160 original shares. The number of mirasdars later decreased to 23 so that each proprietor held so many shares and fractional parts of a share. Place attributed this division into shares to the fact that the major shares represented the allotment made at the original colonisation, each major sharer being the head of a party of colonists who came with a greater or less number of people and labouring followers.¹⁶ Villages were often divided into twenty parts, each part being referred

15. Place's Report, 1799, In Fifth Report ed. Firminger, Vol. III, p. 165.

16. Ibid, B of R (Misc.) Vol. 48, para 69.

to as a na or navu.¹⁷ The shares were expressed in terms of so many na's or navu's. Table I shows the number of mirasi shares and their distribution in the Company's Jaghire for the year 1797.

TABLE - I

Account of the Number of Mirasi Shares And Their Distribution
In The Jaghire for Fualis 106-1207

Names of the Districts.	1207			
	No. of Mirasdars	Shares	No. of Pykaris	Shares
Conjeueram	553	1227	564	821
Carangooly	1241	1610	95	78
Chingleput	1448	3072	147	19
Tripassore	847	1635½	340	421
Poonamallee	876	1548	10	11
Santmagans	500	1000	47	206
Ponnary	491	976	116	240
Peddapollam	382	1011	30	42½
Manimungalam	404	1345½	3	6
Saliwauk	269	451½	1	32½
Outramalove	195	509½	4	113½
Cavantandalam	350	572½	5	14
Covelong	163	237	19	14
Home Farms	509	705	-	2½
Perumbank	131	168½	-	1
Chickercottah	33	45	-	-

SOURCE : Appendix E to Place's Report on the Jaghire 5th July 1799.

17. This is remarkably identical with zamindari villages in Awadh during the Mughal period where this division into twenty was prevalent. Each portion was called

18

Mirasi villages were of three types and possibly evolved along the following lines: The first type of village was the pasungkarei or samudayan village where land was shared in lots among the village mirasidars, each being bound to cultivate his own lot, but sharing the produce according to the extent of his lot after the sarkara share was rendered. As the several mirasidars were here jointly responsible for the governments share of the produce, the revenues of the village were more easy of collection and (for the sarkara) considered less precarious, as at the settlement of accounts profits and losses were shared equally. In the arudikarei or palabhogan villages the shares were permanent and hereditary and could be sold, but with the co-mirasidars having the right of pre-emption. Every landholder was separately accountable for the sarkara share of the produce and for such taxes as were levied on the gross nanjai produce. In Thanjavur, in such villages a redistribution of shares took place every 10 years, by each landholder drawing fresh lots for the portion of land that he was to cultivate next. Thus did each mirasidar get to benefit from the profitability of better soils, and from those lands nearer the village. As mirasidars seldom agreed among themselves their villages were generally reduced to arudikarei tenure.¹⁹ The power of sale, led in some cases

18. Wallace's Report on the Settlement of Tanjore (henceforth Wallace's Report), 1st May 1808 in Bayley and Huddleston, Papers, op.cit., p. 95; also see Fifth Report, ed. Friminger, Vol. III, p. 343.

19. See Tanjore Commissioners Report, 1799, Govt. Gazettee Office, Madras, p. 14.

to the gradual transfer of all the shares to one individual mirasdar, and such a village was called an ekabhogam village. Villages in which the joint proprietary right was held by a community of brahmins was called an Agrahara vadiy.²⁰ In Thanjavur, at the end of the 18th century, there were 1774 samudayan,²¹ 2202 palabhogam and 1807 ekabhogam villages. Around the same time in South Arcot, out of the 3036 villages, 1632 were pasungkarai (53 per cent), 473 were arudikarai (15.5 per cent) and 891 villages were ekabhogam (29 per cent).²² Only in 40 villages were there no traces of miras at all. These 40 villages could have either been paykari villages in which the peasant directly paid his dues to the sarkar, or there could have existed some other type of superior land tenure. In South Arcot we have evidence of a superior right holder called the Mattar (discussed further on in this chapter) who as the 'leading inhabitant' had acquired certain hereditary rights in the lands.²³

The Mirasi Right And Caste

Like most institutions of indigenous and ancient origin the mirasi right too can be said to have passed through the

20. Fifth Report, ed. Firminger, Vol. III, op.cit., p. 336.

21. Wallace's Report, 1804, Bayley and Huddleston, op.cit. 94.

22. Extract from C. Hyde, Selections from Old Records of South Arcot District, op.cit., p. 6.

23. See, Tiruvendinuram Report, op.cit., para 55-56.

framework of the caste system. It was observed that by the 18th century different superior tenures had become more a distinction of caste than anything else.²⁴ According to folklore and tradition, mirasi was said to have been originally conferred on the mudali's of the vellala caste. Later the rights, through sales and grants, passed on to other caste groupings. Brahmins emerged as a distinctly privileged proprietary body particularly in the district of Thanjavur where they acquired extensive mirasi property.

The compensation to the cultivator depended upon the degree of labour bestowed on his land as upon the caste to which he belonged.²⁵ Brahmins were the most favoured in this respect and could claim 50-60 per cent of the gross produce²⁶ after the deduction of charges relating to the village upkeep. As by caste they were forbidden to touch the plough, they either leased the land to 'sudra' cultivators (who would undertake to cultivate the land for 30 out of this 60 per cent the difference being the brahmins' rent), or got it cultivated by landless labourers who were of the 'untouchable' castes of pariars and pallis.²⁷

24. See, Land Tenures in the Carnatic, in Fifth Report, op.cit., p. 336.

25. Place's Report, 1799, op.cit., para 113.

26. Hodgson's Report on Dindigul, 28th March 1808, in Bayley and Huddleston, Papers, op.cit., p. 175.

27. Ibid., p. 115.

of villages in which the absolute proprietary rights were held by brahmins which were called Agrehara Vadiky.²⁸ These villages were acquired as endowments or by purchase and like other mirasi villages were divided into shares called punga constituted what was called a karei. In the same region, villages of which the absolute proprietary right was chiefly held by sudra inhabitants were termed pandara vadiky and the difference lay chiefly in that of the caste of the mirasidars. In Thanjavur at the end of the 18th century, out of a total proprietary body of 62,048 persons brahmins accounted for 17149 (ie., 27 percent). The 'sudras', including Hindus and Christians totalled 43,442 persons (70 per cent) and Muslim³⁰ landholders made up the remaining 1457 (3 per cent).

Thus, the status of the mirasdar varied widely depending upon the extent of land that he had mirasi right over as well as upon the caste to which he belonged. A report on Thanjavur states that "there are proprietors of 4000 acres, of 400 acres, of 4 acres and of one acre."³¹ The same report also notes that "the lower or poorer classes of mirasdars alone follow the plough. The Brahmin mirasdars cannot and the upper classes of Soodra mirasdars will not personally engage in the labour of cultivation".³²

28. Land Tenures in the Carnatic, in Fifth Report ed. Firminger, Vol. III, op.cit., p. 336.

29. Ibid., p. 337.

30. Ibid., p. 343.

31. Wallace's Report, in Bayley and Huddleston, Panars, op.cit., p. 99.

32. Ibid., p. 96.

Alienation of the Mirasi Right

The kani-atchi of a village could be sold, mortgaged, and gifted and here are numerous sale-deeds of the period which would testify to this. The mirasdar was not a proprietor in the absolute sense (the major share of the surplus went to the state and its agents) and held the proprietorship over rights and not the land as such. In this context what has been observed about the zamindari right in the Mughal period could well be applicable here. "Zamindari (read mirasi) therefore did not signify a proprietary right over land. It co-existed with other rights and claims over the soil. It is important to note that zamindari in itself (not the land under zamindari) had all the hallmarks of an article of private property. It was inheritable and could be freely bought and sold." ³³

Recent studies of the Chola period have shown that the sale of kani rights can be traced to at least the 13th century. ³⁴ The sale-deed specimens at our disposal are confined to the alienations of land made in the Tondaimandalam region in the 18th century. ³⁵ The sample is certainly too small to throw any

33. Irfan Habib, Agrarian System..., op.cit., p. 154.

34. N. Karashima, 'The Prevalence of Private Landowning in the Lower Kaveri Valley in the Late Chola Period and its Historical Implications.' (unpublished) An interesting point that emerges from this study is that kani rights in a particular village were being alienated along with non-kani superior rights which strengthens the argument that mirasi and non-mirasi tenures could have existed together.

35. See, for instance, Ellis's Replies, Appendices, where the English translations of numerous sale-deeds have been given.

light on land prices or the nature of the land market. At the most these deeds can be studied as representative of the type of alienations that were being made during the period, which would further serve to clarify certain of the features of the mirasi right that we are studying.

We have reproduced here the main part of a typical sale deed dated 1720 A.D. made by Arjuna Mudali who sold (by auction) his mirasi right in the village of Tandiarpettai (in the Company's Jaghire). ".... and settled to our mutual satisfaction in the presence of the rulers of the land and householders of Tondiarpet, I sold 1/3 of my one share out of ten with the grounds, lands, fields, homestead, water, plantations, large-wells, small wells, the rights of inheritance and rent-free lands thereto belonging, dues from oil presses and, the Parier (slaves) of the suburbs and plains, backyards and all other privileges appertaining thereunto, you are to enjoy, you and your descendants lineally as long as the sun and moon endure...." This one-third share was sold for 50 pagodas. Apart from the seller the deed was attested to and signed by eight other mirasidars of the village.

36. Ellis' Replies, op.cit., Appendices, Sale-deed No. 11, pp. 99-105.

The sale deed will serve to illustrate a number of the features of the mirasi right earlier discussed. In those villages held in pasungkare or joint proprietary tenure, the land strictly speaking was not transferable. It was the indivisible right the mirasdar possessed to a share in the manvams and mareis, to the cultivation of the varapet lands, to receive the tunduvaram if he did not personally cultivate the land and leased it out, etc. For example, if a village was divided into 16 shares and an individual held half a share, he is entitled to 1/32 part of the annual produce of the kani-atchi manvams and mareis; of the total productive varapet lands, he must provide for the cultivation of 1/32 part and will receive the profits from only that extent; from the profits derived from village forests, wastes and waters he gets 1/32 part; and it was only this interest that he could alienate as a mirasdar. It was only a share or a part of a share (one-third in the sale-deed reproduced above) that the mirasdar could thus sell. Secondly, in cases of mirasi sale, the deed had to be approved by all the mirasders of the village. Even though the share was owned by one mirasdar, co-mirasders had the right of pre-emption.

Replying to a question on the purchase value of mirasi in relation to its annual value, Ellis made two very pertinent points. The productive value of mirasi, he noted, was the sum total of the value of the manvams, mareis and other

privileges, the extent and nature of the soil of the varapet lands, the advantages of irrigation, and the share customarily taken by the inhabitants of the total produce, all of which would vary from village to village. Secondly, that the considerations that govern purchase value were very different from those upon which productive value was founded, as the purchaser was basically looking only to the final profit, purchase of land being one of the modes of investing capital. Purchase value was thus dependent on i) productive value and ii) two sales of land were made. In the first the land was sold at about 2½ years purchase value, and in the second case the land was sold at nearly four years purchase value. However taking a rate of interest of 12½ per cent, and assuming that landed security was 1/3 less than money security, he calculated the value of mirasi right in common lands in the villages of Tondiarpettai (i.e., around Madras) to be about five and a half years purchase value, around the end of the 18th century. We have reproduced a table (Table-II) in which the average annual mirasi value held by the mirasdars in the Home Farms (the villages around Madras) in the Fusli years from 1202-4 (1792-94).

37. Ibid., answer to question 14.

TABLE - II

The Value of Mirasi In The Home Farms

Maganams	No. of villages in each Maganam	No. of Miras -dars for Fual 1202-04	Total Value of the Mirasi of each Maganam	Average Value for one year		Average Value of the Mirasi of each Miras-dar for one year.		Average for The Four Maganams.	
				Pag.	Fan.	Cash	Pag.	Fan.	Cash
Trivettore	7	51	3602	9	70	1200	33	22	23
Kodambakon	6	71	3341	41	69	1113	43	76	15
Nungumbakan	7	54	1774	31	70	591	25	50	10
Comore	8	53	2237	33	28	745	41	9	14
Total of the Home Farms	28	229	10956	26	77	3652	8	77	64
								11	64

1. Source: Ellis' Replies, pp. 511, p.

2. This appears a low average; however in it are included only the value of the produce of the manvan and varanet lands and of the Mirasi of the Miradar who besides enjoys a share of the grama-shelavu (village expenses) of the ready money fees collected from Chettis and others, of the sale of freshwater fish the profits from orchards, gardens, backyards etc. Besides it will be found that in most villages there was one or two great proprietors who have the management of the lands and take the greater portion of the agricultural profits, giving the lesser proprietors their grami-bhogam and other dues. The latter procure an additional subsistence by labouring as paikaries in other villages, or by some occupation other than agriculture.

To sum up, the mirasi was a right of an opulent rural class which usually stood above the peasantry (although there were small mirasdars who had to work as tenants in other villages than those in which they held their miras). They had a fiscal claim over lands lying within their mirasia as well as to other dues which were exacted from the peasantry. And finally, although their share of the produce varied greatly, it was on the whole a subordinate share when compared to what the state or its agents took in the form of land revenue.

Other Superior Right - Holding Agrarian Classes in the Carnatic - The Pattakdars:

During the war with Hyder Ali from 1780-1783, the subahs of Kumbakonam, Tiruvadi, and the Shiyali district in Tanjore were almost laid desolate. While in the year previous to the war the nanjai rice produce had come to around 119 lakh cullums of paddy, in the year 1783, immediately after the war, it dropped to only 18 lakh cullums. In order to bring cultivation back to its previous state, the then sirkeel (?) Bava united in small 'puttasams' a village which had most suffered

38. "Many of the mirasdars of Tanjore are opulent, and a great majority of them are in circumstances of ease and comfort...." Blackburne's Report on Tanjore, 1804 in Bayley and Huddleston, Papers..., p. 92.

during the war with another contiguously situated which had not been thus exposed. All the cattle, implements of husbandry, and resources of each were transferred to their mutual relief. The landholders or mirasdars then chose from amongst themselves a principle landholder, who after being approved of by the sarkar was declared the Pattakdar. The sarkar then took from him a gabuliat binding him to the cultivation of the agreed quantity of land. To aid the endeavour of the landholders in improving the state of cultivation, Bava withdrew for a time the sarkar servants and left the entire management of the villages in their hands. Whether as a result of this method or not, production immediately increased to 60 lakh oullums by 1784. Apparently, the introduction of this method was not intended to be permanent, but was only a temporary measure to increase productivity, after which the old village rent system was to have been reverted to. However, Bava was soon after replaced, and his successor took this temporary expedient for a permanent measure. By uniting several villages together, each puttakam became like a small zemindari. The most influential landowner became puttukdar by virtually buying the post. As the puttukdars were made responsible for a defined produce, along with the several taxes levied upon the villagers, they were delegated with the authority of the sarkars servants, who were then dismissed and whose pay was distributed among the puttakdars. The puttukdars, themselves

very often big mirasdars, came to be no different from renters and they carried their oppressions to the highest pitch, with no fear of detection or punishment. By the end of the 18th century they numbered 225 and there was no checking of their influence. They used to levy an illegal fine on each inhabitant of 10-15 fanam on every 100 cullums on the gross maimai produce. On the death of a puttukdar, his son was acknowledged as his successor by the palace. The puttukdars

39. Tanjore Commissioners Report, 1792, op.cit., pp. 7-11.

Pratap Singh seems to have created a large number of land lords as seen in the enormous increase in the land grants during that period. The total money value of the maniam (land grants) was as follows:

<u>Abstract of Maniam</u>	<u>Value</u>		
	<u>Chakrams</u>	<u>Fans</u>	<u>Cash</u>
1. Sarvamaniams (land given permanently tax-free)	22,028	-	4+
2. Choteriams (favourable fixed-rent)	5,395	6	21
3. Lands and Co. also on favourable land-tax but not fixed	3,584	-	21
4. Enams or grants in money	9,854	-	-
5. Jaghires	11,248	5	-
6. Remissions in Varum (tax) and Co.	1,25,557	6	12
7. Lands bestowed on a Poligar newly constituted.	2,560	-	-
	<u>Chukrams</u>	<u>1,80,227</u>	<u>9</u>
	<u>Star Pagodas</u>	<u>75,094</u>	<u>41</u>

formed an alliance with the kavalgars, who although in theory were supposed to be the watchmen or guardians of the villages, became in practice oppressors who would, under threats, levy all kinds of exactions on the villages and became equally feared by the peasants, as well as by the government who were quite powerless against them. Although the pattakkam system was abolished under Company rule, the ancient puttukdars remained the most opulent of the mirasdars.⁴⁰

The Nattars

The Nattars, frequently referred to in the British revenue literature as the principal or leading inhabitants were another privileged rural section, belonging either to the upper crust of the peasantry or to the non-cultivating landed elite. The Fifth Report says that the nattars superintended the cultivation of a circle of villages on the part of the government though services were discontinued when the region was annexed by the British.⁴¹ The origin of the nattars authority can be traced to a very early period when they appeared to have held the civil authority in the administrative unit known as the nadu. They claimed

40. Ibid., paras 26-32.

41. Fifth Report, op. cit., p. 104

precedence in all assemblies composed of more than one caste and possessed some authority, especially over questions of caste.⁴² In ⁶Pondichery, according to evidence from the diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai, in the mid-18th century, the Nattars were responsible for the revenue collection under the amul-dara. For example, four nattars were responsible for the revenue of the countries of Villiyannallur and Lahur countries which comprised 40 and 36 villages respectively.⁴³

In many of the villages of the Jaghire, the nattars held land rights, which the Company sought to curb. For example, in the gusha of Mylapore, in 1774, which contained 2088 kanis of land of which 666 were sarker cultivated lands (i.e. taxable), the nattars had a right to 60 per cent of the crops on their respective lands.⁴⁴ Parames-waran, Modely one of the big nattars of Carangoaly purgunnah, enjoyed privileges valued at Pagodas 400 per annum. This included the revenues of a Shakerium (tax-free) village, the maniam which he held in various villages, and his share of 60 percent of the produce or varum in the villages where he held mireni

42. See Tsukasa Mizushima, 'Nattars in Pondicherry in Mid-18th Century' Paper submitted to the Fifth International Conference of Tamil Studies, Madurai 1992, pp. 8-9.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 16

44. From Revenue Department Consultations, 7th December 1774, Madras Record Office, Vol. I, pp. 162-63.

100

⁴⁵rights. When the Company was granted the farm of Tiruvendipuram in South Arcot in 1766, they found this class of privileged peasant proprietors present in all twenty-six farms of the Farm. Their share peasant could lay claims to. They were entitled to mortgage any of the lands in those villages to the extent of their privileges, and were also entitled to certain fees on those goods which were transported through their regions, and on which 'juncuns' (chungans) or toll-taxes were levied.⁴⁶ Finding them a dispensable drain on the revenues, the Company later abolished⁴⁷ their privileges.

The Poligars

The word 'Poligar' was an English corruption of the Tamil word Palayakkaran which literally meant 'the holder of an armed camp'. The poligars were, in fact, semi-independent military chieftains, who on condition of paying a certain fixed sum, known as 'peshkush' to the ruling sovereign, was the virtual overlord of his palayam. The Fifth Report writes of the poligars as the "head-men of villages, or public

~~44. See~~

45. See Statement of the Present Privileges, According to the Covenants of the Nattars in the Purgunah of Caranpooty, Board's Letter of 2nd October 1800, B of R Consultations, MRO, p. 21.

46. Tiruvendipuram Report, 1776, op.cit. paras 55-62

47. South Arcot District Manual, Madras 1878, p. 226.

servants of other descriptions, whose actual condition had become changed to that of military rulers during the revolutions of power in the Deccan, which had everywhere contributed to the usurpation of authority, and in no part more than in the southern division of the Peninsula. Though their Sunnuds where Sunnuds could be produced, did not particularly describe the terms on which they held their Pollams (estates) they all bore internal evidence of their dependence on the Emperor, and of their subjection to the Subahdars of the Karanatic, to whom they yielded tribute, and whose camp they were bound to attend, whenever summoned, with a military force proportioned to the extent of their local jurisdictions.⁴⁸ The poligars established themselves as a powerful order of military chieftains during the political confusion of the 17th and 18th centuries.⁴⁹ When the revenue collecting authority passed into the hands of the Company, they were faced with this class of recalcitrant chieftains, a large number of whom took up arms in defence of their privileges against the Company.⁵⁰

48. Fifth Report, on. &c., p. 138-39

49. See, K. Rajayyan, Rise and Fall of the Poligars of Tamilnadu, Madras 1974, pp. 1-19.

50. See, Some Account of the Panialamcourchy Poligar and the State of Tinnevely previous to Major Bannerman's Expedition in 1798.

There were four classes of poligars in the Ceded Districts whose origins and status were different: i) those whose territories were situated in jungly^e parts of the country and among the eastern hills, highly independent, with their own body of armed retainers, who had been entrusted with the charge of the police duties in the region. A weak central government must have found it far more expedient to legitimise a poligars authority on condition of receiving a tribute, however small, rather than attempting the impossible task of bringing them to book. ii) those who derived their descent from the ancient rajas who held offices under the previous Hindu government. iii) those who gained their territories by usurpation and force (for example the poligars of Kaidury and Harapanahalli) iv) those who had been renters of districts of revenue officers who had revolted in times of disturbances. It was estimated that in the year 1800, when the Ceded Districts were transferred to Company rule there were about 80 poligars, with about 30,000 armed peons under them.⁵¹ However, it was in the districts of Tirunelveli and Madurai that the largest number and the biggest poligars were to be found. Ramanathapuram and Sivaganga were the largest palayams.⁵²

51. Baden-Powell, Land systems..., 2nd. ed., Vol. III, pp. 19-21.

52. K. Rajayan, Rise and Fall of the Poligars of Tamilnadu, 2nd. ed., p. 21.

Our evidence on the poligari system, is so different as to appear almost contradictory. On the one hand we have the accounts that were written by Company soldiers for whom the poligars were freebooters and bandits who earned their livelihood by the plunder of innocent villagers and who were the hated oppressors of the people. On the other side are the indigenous accounts of the poligars, in ballads and fables, where they are extolled as heroes, fiercely independent who led their people in revolt against the foreign invaders. A realistic assessment of the social role of the poligar in the latter half of the 18th century would appear to lie somewhere between the two extreme versions. The poligars, as big landlords, and as we have seen in the preceding paragraphs, apart from the fact of appropriating a major part of the surplus product, used to levy or extort all kinds of fines and exactions in the name of 'custom' or 'mamool', on the villages. But the oppressions of the poligars paled into insignificance when compared to the rapacious demands of the East India Company. For example, the Company made a settlement in 1799-1800 in which they increased revenue demands by 117 percent over the old assessments. When the Company pressed for a higher peishough, the poligars could

53. As an example of this type of account see the account of Major Bannerman's campaigns against the Tinnevely poligars which we have already referred to above.

54. For example, the ballad Kattabomman Kathai Padal or 'Iver Rajakkal Por', a ballad sung as Villupattu (bow song)

only comply by increasing taxations, thus shifting the burden of a sharply increased revenue demand onto the shoulders of the peasantry. This led to the poligar wars of the 18th century, led by the dispossessed poligars who were able to draw into their camp the ruined peasantry of their erstwhile palayams. While this uprising was smaller, and posed far less a threat to colonial rule when compared with the uprising of 1857 in the north, the poligar uprisings had nevertheless a similar social content: a predominantly agrarian upsurge, led by members of a dispossessed landlord class (who were fighting for the restitution of their rights) against colonial rule.⁵⁵

The poligar was generally entitled to 50 per cent of the gross produce of the lands within his palayam, although in practice his share was invariably much larger.⁵⁶ Besides this, they derived a considerable revenue from the fees which they levied on the inhabitants as 'watchers' of the village. These fees were of two descriptions, the Talum Naval

55. For a narrative account of the Poligar wars see A. Rajayyan, South Indian Rebellion, in certain tracts of Tirunelveli district, in which popular poligar heroes are immortalised as gods and their valour celebrated. See N. Vanamamalai, Studies in Tamil Folk Literature, 1969, pp. 49-99.

56. Caldwell, History of Tinnevely.... p. 104.

or village watching and the Desha Kaval or the district watching.

The Taluk Kaval was apparently the more ancient fee; the village talliar or watchman was in charge of the safety of the grain and cattle in the village and was remunerated in kind, generally, by the village community. In Tirunelveli, the poligars had no connection with this duty and usurped it by force. In the late 18th century there were only 477 villages that had the original Kavalkaras, the remaining 1645 had poligars performing these duties. The Desha Kaval was considered an arbitrary collection by the poligars of later years between the years 1740 and 1760. When the Desha Kaval fees were not paid satisfactorily "torture and the whip are applied, the whole village put into confinement, every occupation interdicted, the cattle pounded, the inhabitants taken captive in and not infrequently murdered in, the Pollams; and in short, every outrage of violence and cruelty, is committed, until their purposes are obtained." 57

57. Placc's report on the Jaghire, 1799, para 473.

Apart from all this the poligar could levy taxes under various pretences like hunting fees, fees for marriage expenses etc.

In most parts of the Carnatic, a part of the surplus produce was appropriated by the temple - be it the small village 'pogoda' or one of the bigger shrines like the Kanchipuram temple in the Jaghire. In Tirunelveli for example, the Naeab took possession of the lands that had been set aside for the support of a number of Hindu temples and substituted for it income in money. In 1211 this fund amounted to Rs.179,691; and it was called the Dastik allowance. Revenues on lands alienated in favour of temples were called manium revenues; an annual income of 26,000 was derived from this source. Then there was the tiruppani which was derived mainly from a deduction made out of the gross produce of wet lands before the division was effected between the ryot and the sarkar, which yielded a yearly income of about Rs.21,000. Besides all these, the temples held a large amount of lands under the designation of sarvamanium and kattukuthugai, either free of assessment or on favourable tenures.⁵⁸

In Table III we have shown the distribution of the Tarabaddy maniums (i.e., the land given on favourable assessments) to four categories of which the first three i.e., the miraedars, the poligars and the temples claimed the largest extent as well as the most productive of the manium lands.

58. Tinnevely District Gazetteer, Vol., pp.312-313.

TABLE - III : The Distribution of the Terrabudy Manjams among the 4 classes of Proprietors
the quantity cultivated and the value of the Gross produce for Paddy

	1205			1206			
	Total cultivated Manjams	Total value of each class	Total cultivated Manjams	Total value of each class	Total cultivated Manjams		
	Manjams (in kants)	Pag. Jan. Cash (in kants)	Manjams (in kants)	Pag. Jan. Cash (in kants)	Manjams (in kants)		
1st Class Mirasi Inhabitants	2994 $\frac{3}{16}$	450 $\frac{3}{16}$	9376 28 17	3194	408 $\frac{7}{16}$	19244 43 65	3048 $\frac{1}{2}$
2nd class Temples & Co.	1779 $\frac{11}{16}$	135 $\frac{1}{4}$	6163 6 40	1834 $\frac{11}{16}$	120 $\frac{1}{4}$	6153 40 43	1660 $\frac{3}{8}$
3rd class Pollgars & Co.	1732 $\frac{3}{8}$	3000 $\frac{3}{4}$	58538 18 1	18174 $\frac{3}{4}$	2462 $\frac{1}{16}$	56303 38 47	17309 $\frac{9}{16}$
4th class Others	680 $\frac{13}{16}$	251 $\frac{3}{4}$	2462 25 40	722	171 $\frac{1}{2}$	2061 17 16	753 $\frac{1}{2}$

* The four classes of proprietors were

1st Class : Mirasi Inhabitants or proprietors of the lands.

2nd Class : The manjams go towards the support of the ceremonies performed in the various temples and the Brahmins this class are the manjams of the temple dancing girls & musicians.

3rd Class : The Pollgar who guards the property of the villages; the village curran or accountant, the carpenter, doctor, potmaker, wall sinker, banher, washerman.

4th Class : Towards those individuals whose work goes towards the upkeep of the village like the snake doctor, pandal (where travellers can rest) etc.

** SOURCE : APPENDIX E TO PLACES REPORT ON THE JAGHIRE 5 JULY 1799.

CHAPTER - V

THE LAND REVENUE

It would be fitting to begin this survey of the nature and magnitude of the land revenue from the Carnatic in the 18th century by recalling the observation made by Shindeen almost a century earlier.¹ The very low levels of peasant subsistence in the south, he wrote, allowed for and our revenues to be extracted by their rulers, from which the massive temples of south India were built. This serves as an excellent illustration of the land-tax: it could well embrace the entire surplus produce which the ruler had the theoretical right to claim.

The Carnatic during the 18th century, was never under the control of any one centralised revenue collecting authority and consequently was not subjected to a systemised and uniform assessment and collection mechanism. By the middle of the 18th century, from which date commenced the rule of the Nawabs of Arcot over the Carnatic, there was an increase in assessment and a greater harshness in revenue collection methods, if the evidence from later British accounts is to be

1. Qutub-ud-Din Ali 'The Agrarian Legacy of the 17th and 18th Centuries', paper read at the Association for Asian Studies seminar, San Francisco, 1965, p. 1-15

believed. In most of the Carnatic districts the peasant had to part with 50-60 per cent of the gross produce from his lands as land-tax to the State.² The Maratha rulers imposed very high rates of assessment in the fertile district of Thanjavur. We have the eye-witness account of John de Britto (1695) who, while describing the extortionate demands made by the Marathas, wrote that: "Koji (the Maratha King) levies four-fifths of all the produce. As if that were not enough, instead of accepting this share in kind, he makes the ryots pay in money. And since he is careful to fix the price at a figure much above that which the cultivator can get, the proceeds of the sales of the whole crop are insufficient to meet the land assessment. Thus the ryots linger under the weight of a crushing debt and are often put to cruel tortures to prove their inability to pay... the tyranny in the Gingee country is even more frightful and revolting."³ This observation was made in 1695, but such high demands were continued into the 19th century.⁴

The steep rise in the demands on the peasants that occurred under the Nawab's administration, however, can be also partially attributed to another factor: this was the

2. North Arcot District Annual, Vol.I, p.110; see also, Tinnevely District Annual, p.,70.

3. Sadara District Gazetteer, Vol.I, p. 101.

4. See, Tanjore Commissioner's Report, 1795, para 56.

increasing dependence of the Nawab on the English East India Company and 'private' English creditors at Madras. The Company here did not have to become 'the Dewan' of the Carnatic as they had done in Bengal in 1765. The Nawab remained the nominal revenue administrator while the Company enjoyed all real power. Large areas of the Carnatic passed under the control of the private creditors of the Nawab as mortgages for his debts; they extracted the revenues with a ruthlessness that must have surpassed all previous regimes.⁵

The sudden decline in economic prosperity in the Carnatic as a result of the near pillage^a it had been subjected to in the course of a few decades was attested to by servants of the Company themselves. George Smith, a Company servant testifying before the Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1782 deposed as follows: "...Being asked in what state the interior of the Carnatic was with regard to commerce and cultivation when he first knew it (i.e., in 1764), he said that at that period, he understood the Carnatic to be in a well cultivated and populous condition, and as such consuming a great many articles of merchandise and trade. Being asked in what condition it was when he left Madras (i.e., in 1779) with respect to cultivation, greatly on the decline, and also in respect of population; and as to commerce, exceedingly

5. See Chapter VI on the Carnatic Debts for a more detailed treatment of the subject.

circumscribed."⁶ With similar telling testimony, the desolation of the district of Ihanjavur was described. "... not many years ago (i.e., prior to 1732) that province (i.e., Ihanjavur) was considered as one of the most flourishing, best cultivated, populous districts in Hindostan... but its decline has been so rapid that in many districts it would be difficult to trace the remains of its former opulence. Since the year 1771, the era of the first seige, until the restoration of the Raja... trade, manufacture and agriculture were neglected and many thousands of inhabitants went in quest of a more secure abode."⁷ This would appear to be confirmed by the account of the Tanjore Commissioners who, in their Report of 1793 wrote of the devastation of agriculture owing to excessive revenue demands, and the consequent desertion of their villages of large numbers of the labouring population, slaves, etc.⁸

Thus, wherever the Company took over direct charge of the revenues of any area, far from assessments being lessened they were in fact scaled up, particularly in the last decades of the 18th century when land settlements began to be introduced. The extraction of revenue, although now put on a more systematic footing, represented in fact a higher and

6. See, R.C. Dutt, The Economic History of India, Vol.I, p.64.

7. Ibid., pp. 71-72.

8. Tanjore Commissioner's Report, 1793, p 52

more intense form of exploitation. Munro, in making a case for a permanent ryotwari settlement of the Madras Presidency districts himself described the exorbitant revenue he had raised as being 45 per cent of the gross produce and called for a reduction of 25 per cent in this demand in the actual settlement.⁹ When the Carnatic districts came under the Company's administration in 1792, the Madras government was faced with the problem of dealing with the numerous petty, tribute-paying military chieftains called Poligars. The Board of Revenue decided that the only way to eliminate them would be to raise the revenue demanded from the poligar territories to such a high level that they would find it impossible to meet the demand, and this could be used as an excuse for the usurpation of their territories. Consequently, in 1799 they increased the revenue demand by 117 per cent. The Poligars being unable to fulfil this demand rose in insurrection against the Company but were soon suppressed.¹⁰

Such were the general pressures. In the following pages, more detailed information from the later years of the 18th century is studied with a view to delineating the situation in more specific terms.

9. H.S. Dutt, The Economic History of India, Vol.I, p.92.

10. Ibid., p. 93.

For a study of the magnitude of the land revenue demand the evidence that we have at our disposal is certainly a little patchy. Since aggregate figures covering the whole of the Carnatic for the late 18th century are difficult to compile, we have had to use the available district level figures, recognizing that the nature of the data of the respective districts vary widely in quality and detail.

The most detailed statistical information of the rural economy of the Jaghire (Paingaleput) is contained in an exhaustive report compiled in the closing years of the 18th century by the then Collector of the district, Lionel Place.¹¹ While Place has given the total revenue collections from the Jaghire for the years 1797-99, he also attempted to calculate what the subsistence level of an average family during that period was. Although not the object of Place's investigations, these figures would provide quantitative evidence for one of the most important questions posed in a study of the land revenue, i.e., whether the land revenue was equal to rent or not. In other words: after meeting the requirements for bare subsistence of the population, was the entire surplus taken in the form of land revenue, or did any portion of it remain with the cultivators to be ploughed back as investment into agriculture.

11. Place's Report on the Jaghire, 1799.

Let us follow Place's calculations on the subsistence levels in the Jaghire.¹² His figures pertain to a period covering three years, 1797-99. At the outset he gives the average quantity of foodgrains available for annual consumption in the Jaghire after having deducted from it the annual quantity required for seed. Alongside he gives the average of the population recorded in each of the four years. The figures he gives are as follows:

Aggregate of population of the Jaghire recorded for each of four years	:	1,024,024 persons	
Population of the Jaghire (average of the four years)	:	256,006	
The whole gross produce within the same period		<u>PADDY</u> (in cullens)	<u>RYE GRAIN</u> (in cullens)
		1,358,028	508,768
Average produce for each year	:	364,507	127,192
Amount annually required for seed	:	63,353	19,240
Amount remaining for annual consumption and sale	:	301,154	107,952

Place's next step was to make an estimate of the average consumption of a family comprising ten members, with the warning that "... in a matter of this kind the necessary subsistence of the rich and the poor must be considered alike, for the consumption of food among the first can be increased

12. Ibid., para 431-440.

only by the maintenance of a greater number of the second; their luxuries and peculiar enjoyments are taken out of the common surplus stock reserves for sale..." He makes the following estimate of the daily requirements of a family of ten, making allowance for the purchase of necessaries like clothing, expenditure on indispensable ceremonies and other necessary items of expenditure as well:

10 seers of allo or ragi (a type of dry grain)
 4 seers of nutchery and grains of that species.
 $3\frac{1}{2}$ seers of Jounaloo, Conbaloo and other varieties
 11 seers of paddy.¹³

Thus the expenses of the inhabitants of the Jaghire, according to Place, were drawn from the several species of grains in the undermentioned proportions:

13. According to Place a man who performs hard labour—"the most robust of them"—will not consume more than half a seer of raw rice. Children would consume even less and infants, nothing. Thus 4 seers of paddy would provide for one adult person and nine others and could thus be divided:

	seer
1 person at a seer	1
2 persons at $\frac{1}{2}$ a seer	1
3 persons at $\frac{1}{3}$ a seer	1
4 persons at $\frac{1}{4}$ a seer	1
	<hr/>
	4

Place's Report 1799, 439.

<u>People</u>		<u>Cullums</u>
12905	were maintained with	35,984 of Alloo
35491	" " "	35,984 of Butcheny etc.
40561	" " "	<u>35,984 of Jounaloo</u>
31354	" " "	1,07,952 of dry grain
16784	" " "	4,65,767 of paddy

or that 256,006 persons were maintained with 573,713 cullums of different sorts of dry grain.

There was thus then an average surplus stock of subsistence of 435,387 cullums or 13061 garce of paddy of different kinds. According to Place, this amount was put on the market "the value of which constitutes the fund with which implements of husbandry are purchased and from where the luxuries and accumulating wealth of the inhabitants of the Jaghire are at large derived..." The Jaghire then produced a surplus which, at Places's rate of subsistence, could have maintained a population of 156,164 persons per annum over and above its own population.

The question that most naturally arises here is what the governments share of the total surplus was, a question that Place surprisingly does not even consider, as he assumes that the value of the surplus is clear profit to the inhabitants. This however could obviously not have been the case, and Place himself, later on in the Report,

does speak of the Sarkar share of the crop that was put on the market. The total value of the Sarkar share of the crop was Pag. 295,825 Sn. 13 Cash. 45. The price of paddy in Madras in 1795 was around 13 mercials per pagoda. The value of the surplus stock at this rate must then have been Pagodas 401,395. Thus the land-tax accounted for over 70 per cent of the total surplus produced. This was surely an extortionate demand at a time when the region had not fully recovered from the effects of a famine which ravaged the countryside in the 1780's. British accounts of the period refer angrily to the conduct of the Nawab's revenue administration which resulted in the destruction of agriculture and frequent famines; the Nawab's government "by tripling the just demands of government and by levying heavy imposts upon the necessities of life... the husbandman fled to the woods to find by rapine..."¹⁴ The Company's own administration, judging from the evidence we have at our disposal could hardly have been better.

Methods of Assessment

The broad division of agricultural land into Manjai or artificially irrigated land and Punjai, or the lands dependent on seasonal rains only, provided the basis for the assessment

14. Place's Report. 1791, para 67.

of revenue. This division was indeed the standard one over the whole of the southern region. The nature of the sources on the various methods of assessment that were followed in the 13th century, as well as certain regional specificities demand that each district of the Carnatic be taken up separately for consideration.

In the fertile district of Trichinopoly, the revenues were collected by different methods in the Adaranban or dry tract and Miraranban or watered tracts.¹⁵ On the wet or irrigated lands the crops were generally divided between the state and the peasant and the nominal rate of division was an equal share of the crop to both parties, after a deduction of the expenses of reaping which amounts to 5 per cent of the gross produce. This was the general rate, but in lands watered by tanks, or in very low-lying lands where there was a risk of damage to the crop, the cultivator was allowed 55-58 per cent; in lands newly cleared and cultivated his share was 60 per cent and in lands watered by picotas and other means which were laborious it varied from 65-67.75 per cent.¹⁶

15. Trichinopoly District Manual, Vol.I, pp. 201-211.

16. Ibid, p.211. See also, Fifth Report 1812, in British Parliamentary Papers, op. cit., Vol.VII, p.117. It is mentioned that on the Ranjailands the rates varied from 40-60 per cent of the gross produce.

Nowhere did the cultivator actually receive the above shares from the produce. In the Trichinopoly districts, the peasant had to part with another 23-28 per cent of the gross produce as swatantrums or allowances to the village artificers, Brahmins, accountants etc. Thus if we take the standard division of the crop at 50 per cent and again deduct 25 per cent of the half part which went as swatantrums, then the cultivator would in fact be only left with 37.5 per cent of the gross produce.¹⁷

In the last two years of the Nawab's government another deduction was made from the cultivator's share varying between 3 and 5 per cent on account of the pretended non-payment of old balances.

The governments share of the crop was put immediately on the market. Table I shows the extent of wet (munjal) land cultivated, the government share of the crop after deducting the cultivators' share of the produce; the maniums of land grants given to Brahmins; the average rate at which the government share was sold and the total amount of the sales.

In Bellore, as in many areas of the Carnatic, varus or crop-sharing was regulated by two factors: 1. the caste and

17. See Wallace's Report on Trichinopoly 1802 (hereafter Wallace's Report) p.10756. Also see Fifth Report, p.117.

TABLE - 1 : EXTENT OF CULTIVATED LAND AND RAIN NUT COLLECTIONS IN TRICHINOPOLY DISTRICT.

Total number of chays cultivated and the produce thereof.		Deduct reaping			Gross produce after deducting reaping cooly			In habitants share percent			Inhabitants' share of the gross produce.		
		Culle	M	M	Culle	M	M	Culle	M	M	Culle	M	M
1744 1/8	20902	10	3 1/2	7 1/2	963	19939	3	3	1)50,55,56		9970	8	-
12191 5/8	324514	9	-	1/2	15600	308414	4	3 1/2	2)56,56,60,66		154921	1	1 1/2
34038 23/32	786876	7	2	6	38572	748704	1	1	3)50,55,56,57,58,60,65,66		378234	8	1
2009 7/4	58722	7	-	4 3 1/2	2775	559479	2	1/2	4)50,56,60		27979	3	2 1/2
5845	131055	5	3	6	6134	124920	11	-	5)50,56,60		62664	5	1
108 1/2	2706	8	3	2	143	2563	6	3	6)50		1281	9	1
3202 7/16	12668	10	-	-	534	12134	9	1 1/2	7)50,55,56,60,65 and 66		6155	8	2
59139 29/32	1337447	10	3 1/2	7	64323	1273124	3	1/2			641207	8	1

Govt. share after deducting the inhabitants' share			Add gleanings made good by the watcher etc.			Total Govt. share			Product Maniums to Bramins		
Culls	M	N	Culls	M	M	Culls	M	M	Culls	M	M
9968	7	3	231	6	-	10200	1	8	219	10	2
153993	3	2	1615	6	2	155658	10	-	6695	2	2 1/2
370469	5	-	2378	1	1/2	373847	6	1/2	15843	5	2 1/2
27967	10	2	424	6	1	28392	4	3	425	10	1
62256	5	3	916	4	3	63172	10	2	975	1	1 1/2
1281	9	2	86	2	1/2	1567	11	2 1/2	-	-	-
5979	-	3 1/2	140	11	2	6120	-	1/2	50	9	2 1/2
631916	6	3 1/2	6793	2	1	638709	9	1/2	24190	4	-

Continue horizontally

End

Net Govt. share	Average selling price per cullum		Amount sales according to the averaged prices				
	M	M	Gfs	Che	Chuckrums	Gfs	Che
culls	M	M	Gfs	Che	Chuckrums	Gfs	Che
9980	3	1	9	6 1/2	9205	5	14
148913	7	1 1/2	10	30 1/2	163156	6	10
358024	-	2	10	21 1/2	382479	2	3
27966	6	2	9	3 1/2	25334	5	16
62197	9	1/2	7	33 1/2	48193	7	30
1367	11	2 1/2	13	1 1/2	1843	4	-
6069	2	3	15	1/2	9117	1	24
611519	5	1/2	-	-	639330	3	1

SOURCE : KALIACHI'S REPORT ON TRICHINOPOLY, 1802, MS, BOARD OF LUNDE PROCEEDINGS,
MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

social status of the mirasadar or landlords¹⁸ and 2. the labour incident to cultivation. Of the privileged class of Brahmans who did not by tradition follow the plough the priests got six out of ten parts and the sarkar four out of the net produce. The higher caste of rachavar, velavar and kannavar received the same favourable ratio.¹⁹ In the nanjai villages of Madurai the lands were of two types: the first was called suralneshanam or lands watered by canals from rivers, and the second nanawarpet, or lands watered by tanks fed by the rains. In the first type of land, the crop was subject to deductions of the swatantrum previous to division of nearly 20%. The remainder was then divided between the ryot and the sarkar. If any intervening person between them concluded the bargain, then that person received the share from the ryot of 7-10%, called the swanibhogam. The lands of the second category however, was more profitable to the sarkar, as they were no swatantrum deductions, as they required much less labour in cultivation.²⁰

18. Mellore District Manual, Vol.I, p.273; also see, Fifth Report 1812, p.344.

19. Mellore District Manual, Vol.I, p.273.

20. Murdie's Report on Madurai, 1802, pp.8-12.

Simple crop-sharing, however, was not the invariable practice in the panjai lands in Bellore as well as the other districts. In 18th Century English tract on agrarian practices in the Carnatic states that

"The mode of renting the ground depends on the way it can be watered. If by pacotas (navarie) and consequently attended with much labour, it is let to them at a stipulated sum amounting to ten or twelve rupees per cawny. This, supposing it to produce from twenty to thirty kalams, leaves them (where rice sells moderately dear) ten or twelve rupees for their share of profit, after one-tenth of the whole produce calculated according to the bazar or shop price has been deducted. On lands that are watered by channels from rivers or tanks are let out for shares, of which the sarkar gets five and a half and the farmer four and a half out of which he is obliged to pay the malavarum, on the one-tenth, at the bazar price."²¹

In Tanjore, under the Marathas and later under the Nawab's administration, the system seemed to have been even more developed. On the irrigated land the production capacity of each villager was permanently estimated in terms of kalams of paddy, and the tax paid to the government was a fixed share of this assessment. It was not paid in grain but converted into money at a commutation price fixed every year by the government, on a consideration of the commercial value of paddy at the time. In 1773, when Tanjore came under the Nawab's administration, the 'amani' system of

21. G. Heyne, Tracts on Agriculture, pp. 6-7.

revenue collections was introduced. Here the crop was harvested under the superintendence of the officers of the government and the actual amount of produce harvested was taken as the basis of the village rent instead of a mere estimate of the quantity. The rent was then received in kind or its value was computed into a money payment.²²

We give below an example of the Maratha system of revenue collection and disbursements in the Manargudi Moubah of Thanjavur compiled in 1800 by the Collector of Tanjore district, for Fushli 1209. Although the rates differed from area to area, they were in nature similar throughout Thanjavur.²³

MANJAI REVENUE OLD FORM (THE MARATHA FORM)

Manargudi Suba, Fushli 1209

	<u>Collars</u>	<u>Markals</u>
Gross settled produce of the War and Cuddapah, Samba and Peshanum crops	2,697,985	9.75
<u>Allowances out of the Gross Produce</u>		
Deduction 1st Kouil or Church grants	5,368	2.00
Deduction 2nd Brahmin grants	5,617	2.00
Deduction 3rd Maralee fees to Chavilgars	9,241	9.75
Total ..	10,226	7.75

(This total was fixed at less than one percent)

22. Tanjore District Gazetteer, Vol.I, pp.168-169.

23. Board of Revenue Consultations, Vol.259, pp.6948-6951.

	<u>Cullums</u>	<u>Perkels</u>
Deduction 4th Swatantrums to artificers	23,109	2.50
(This was also fixed at less than one per cent)		
Deduction: Swatantrums to government	15,656	2.75
Total of allowances out of the gross produce	<u>57,793</u>	<u>1.00</u>
Net Produce.	2,540,195	3.75
The <u>Kudivaram</u> or inhabitants share is taken at rates varying in every puttucum between 40 and 60 per cent amounting to	1,121,623	4.12
<u>Sw tantrums</u> to government out of the <u>Kudivaram</u> , undefined and varying	14,304	11.5
Net <u>Kudivaram</u>	1,107,319	4.02
The gross <u>Kudivaram</u> above is	1,121,649	4.12
<u>Kailvaram</u> or government share	1,413,546	4.02
<u>Allowances out of the Kailvaram</u>		
Deduction 1st. <u>Zeyil</u> or Church Grants	361	3.5
2nd Brahmin Grants	4,080	10.5
3rd <u>Karales</u> or <u>Kavil</u> r fees	543	10.25
Total out of the Kailvaram	4,984	3.5
Remainder	1,413,560	3.8
<u>Summa Soll or additions to government</u>		
1st. <u>Sw-tuntrums</u> the 5th deduction from the gross produce	15,652	2.75
2nd. <u>Swatantrums</u> out of the <u>Kudivaram</u>	14,304	11.5
Net <u>Kailvaram</u> or government share	1,443,513	3.1

	<u>CHURUNG</u>	<u>SALE</u>	<u>GALE</u>
The <u>Kar</u> and <u>Cuddapah</u> revenue at <u>Gopali</u> fanams 3.25 per cullum	49,373	2	24
The <u>Bumbah</u> and <u>Peshanah</u> revenue at 3.53 fanams per cullum	299,213	9	14
Income from both crops to the inhabitants	348,570	2	25

On the irrigated or Punjai lands on which dry grains were chiefly grown, the practice was to levy a fixed money assessment or tirva. The punjai culture which required only partial supplies of water was not so frequently exposed to failure. The variety of crops maturing at different periods of the year posed a great obstacle to crop-sharing.²⁴ The method of fixing the tirva here was as follows: when a ryot undertook to cultivate any tract of jungle or waste land it was made over to him on gowle or lease for a particular term on the principle of a progressive increase in assessment the sum having been fixed by the village record keepers or head inhabitants in conjunction with the sarkar servants, to be paid annually. Once the ground reached what was supposed to be the highest peak of cultivation and with the expiration of the gowle, a fixed tirva was imposed. This was arrived at with reference to the valuation of that kind of arable land under the village and with the approval of the sarkar

24. Fifth Report, 1812, p.117.

servants, the Reddy, the registrar and some of the principle villagers. This was considered the manul tirva or customary assessment and registered in the village accounts. Thus the rates in every village would differ according to the grain cultivated and the productivity of the land.²⁵ In Trichinopoly on the punjai or high lands on both sides of the Kaveri, the crops were wholly dependent on the rains that fell between June and January for their fertility. On some of these land the state's share was collected according to certain fixed assessments. The revenue here could not be raised except by extortion, a practice which the garkar servants resorted to frequently. In other villages the revenue was cultivated according to the species of grain cultivated, and in yet others a varying assessment on the different classes of soil was levied.²⁶

In Thanjavur, under the Maratha administration, there were three types of punjai land. The first was watered solely by the rains and the second, called punjai putent was watered by picotas and wells and produced vegetables fruit and grains which were taxed. The third was called varasha putent, watered

25. Mellore District Manual, p. 271-272.

26. Wallace's Report, 1802, pp. 10750-10761. The Report also states that "the inhabitants of these tracts are in a state of poverty, not arising so much from the barrenness of the lands, or the precariousness of supplies of water as from the oppressions and extortions to which they have been long exposed."

only by the rains, but being situated on high lands and thus of inferior quality, bore a lower tax. The latter two types of land were also called Bornadayam.²⁷

In the Mannagudi subah of Thanjavur, the following account shows the extent of puniai lands cultivated and the revenues thereof in the Kar and Peshanum seasons for the year fusli 1209.²⁸

Puniai Cultivation in the Mannagudi Suba for Fusli 1209

Extent cultivated in the Kar season	<u>yalies</u> 33	<u>ma's</u> 10.5	
	<u>culluue</u>	<u>merkals</u>	
Settled gross produce	961	3	
<u>Manium</u>	1	-	
Net produce ...	960	3	
Kudivaram, varying from 50-60 per cent	554	9	
Remainder, government's share of <u>mailvaran</u>	405	6	
<u>Maniuma</u>	3	2	
Net <u>Mailvaran</u>	402	4	
	<u>chukrams</u>	<u>fans</u>	<u>cash</u>
Value relating to the prices fixed	177	4	6
Add the <u>Calana Taxareer</u> at Gopal fanams 5 per 100 <u>chukrams</u> ...		8	26
Revenue from the <u>Kar</u> crop..	148	3	-
	<u>yalies</u>	<u>ma's</u>	
Extent cultivated in the <u>Peshanam</u> season	37	18.5	

27. Board of Revenue Consultations, Vol.259, p.6966.

28. Board of Revenue Consultations, Vol.259, pp.6967-6969.

	<u>Gullum</u>	<u>Sarkar</u>	
settled gross produce	942	10	
<u>manium</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>-</u>	
Net produce....	<u>939</u>	<u>10</u>	
Kudivaram ranging from 50-60 percent	513	11.5	
Remainder <u>Kailvaram</u> or government's share	345	10.5	
<u>manium</u>	<u>9</u>		
Net <u>Kailvaram</u>	<u>330</u>	<u>10.5</u>	
	Chakrams	Lane	Cash
Total value	<u>114</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>

In spite of the large amount of sarkar revenue from the gross maniai and punjai produce in comparison to the share taken by the peasants, further deductions were made from the latter's share: "...arising from the remaining share of the settled produce they pay to the government fees in money, heavily oppressive under the denomination of chillary coodutal and cajanna tucareer."²⁹

The practice in Thanjavur under the Marathas of conferring private favour in the form of maniums on Brahmin landowners and temples appear to have further increased assessments and other

29. Board of Revenue Consultations, II, Vol 259, p.6951.

ARRAIDON, OF PASPAI CULTIVATION, IN THE YEAR AND PREPARING CROPS FOR JULY 1209
IN THE ARRABODI AREA OF SHANAYOR

Source: Board of Revenue Consultations, Vol.259, p.6357-6363.

Total Punjab revenue to Government { Chukrs. 293

exactions on the peasantry. It was noted here that "...in every village are consequently to be seen the extremes of opulence and want. One inhabitant has all the enjoyments to be procured from a fertile country, while another cultivating the same rich soil obtains little more than he would were he the cultivator of a desert. That wealth which circulation ought to give life to the whole, lies dormant in one part and leaves the other to languish and perish."³⁰

The only information on the exact rent rates on punjai lands that we were able to obtain for our period states that the practice in the Carnatic was to let the punjai lands out on a stipulated rent which was regulated by the quality of the ground which renders it capable of producing certain types of grain. This account goes on to state that "A cawny of the soil on which leguminous grains are sown is rented from one and a half to three rupees. It is the worst kind of soil, being sandy and barren, and very little tillage bestowed upon it. The soil on which what are called small grain are sown, as jonna, aruga, raghie and c., rents at from three to six rupees the cawny, besides the malivaram, or one-tenth of the whole produce at the bazar price."³¹ As the punjai culture required only partial supplies of water they were not so frequently exposed to failure; and the risk incurred by the ryot in

30. Ibid., pp. 6958-6959.

31. S. Heyne, Fracts...., p.7.

agreeing to a money rent was consequently less.³²

The methods of land revenue collection by the Nawab's administration were harsh and exacting, made worse by the double pressures on the land by the Nawab's private creditors.³³ The system that prevailed in the Jaghire was as follows: at the beginning of the year a dowle was given to the peasant, permitting him to cultivate his lands with the assurance that he would receive his proper share of the crops. When the harvest approached, a dowle or estimate was made of the sarkars share of the grain cut or which was on the ground, as well as of the produce of future cultivation and a price was fixed upon it by the amil with the approval of the head inhabitants. These two parties would then submit the dowle for the approval of the Nawab's manager (in order to influence when a payment is made). The Manager then reported and recommended the dowle to the Nawab, who being unable to investigate, confirmed it. All the parties involved in this long process also added their own demands to the original sum of the agreement.³⁴ Thus the burden of rent on the peasant increased tremendously, and until he could pay it the grain remained uncultivated in heaps or stacks.³⁵

32. Fifth Report, 1812, Vol. VII, p. 117.

33. "The system of management....exhibited throughout a scene of boundless exaction and rapacity, on the part of the government and its officers; of evasion on that of the inhabitants; or of collusion between them and the public servants while the revenue diminished every year with the cultivation." Fifth Report, Vol. VII, p. 101.

34. Place's Report on the Jaghire, 1799, paras 174-176.

35. This was a practice that Buchanan noted as well. He contrasts this custom of keeping the grain in stacks till

It was observed that "he (i.e., the peasant, finds that he has been unwittingly paying Khurch, Nuzzer, assessment and additional assessment, which could absorb the greater part and often the whole of what he had reserved for his necessary subsistence; he must therefore, either content himself with the small pittance that would ultimately be left to him.... or abscond...."36

While we do not have complete figures for the magnitude of land revenue in all the provinces under the Nawab's administration, we have reproduced a table showing the land revenue collections made in Nellore and Ongole which shows that that in the last twenty years or so of the Nawab's administration there was a falling off of the land revenue collections. The next table shows the revenues of Thanjavur under the Maratha and Company managements.

the rents are paid with the custom in Bengal where the crops were not allowed to be cut till the rents were paid. See Buchanan, Journey... In Pinkerton's Voyages.... Vol.VIII, p.574.

36. Place's Report on the Jaghire, 1799, para, 177; also see Fifth Report, 1812, Vol.VII, p. 118.

TABLE- II : LAND REVENUE COLLECTIONS IN NELLORE.

[illegible]

Go S	Paddy Revenue				Chillery seedlings				Total Paddy				Including Subsidies				Total				R E M A I N I N G
	Star Page	a n	a n	Cash n	Star Page	a n	a n	Cash n	Star Page	a n	a n	Cash n	Star Page	a n	a n	Cash n	Star Page	a n	a n	Cash n	
49 128	715469	14	70		61688	6	10		777157	21	-		185041	28	-		900199	7	-		
12 128	596405	2	32 1/2		80725	7	-		677180	9	32 1/2		178220	35	-		855401	2	32 1/2		
22 32	537594	21	43 1/2		80124	35	70		617719	15	33 1/2		176791	28	-		794511	1	33 1/2		
105 124	747848	7	-		76443	33	27 1/2		824291	40	27 1/2		177375	-	-		1001666	40	27 1/2		
47 64	478071	1	42 1/2		78146	38	66 1/4		556217	40	29		177379	4	75		733597	3	24		
.89	271907	11	5		66690	9	30		338594	15	35		30310	2	6		368904	17	41		
	582172	7	-		13143	23	50		595315	30	50		173170	22	25		768486	10	75		
94	500713	18	66		30513	25	47 1/2		531227	2	32 1/2		175941	31	57 1/2		707168	34	10		
23	597268	1	77 1/2		41882	31	5		639150	33	2 1/2		209256	21	35		848407	12	37 1/2		
75	495836	4	47 1/2		50263	14	-		546099	18	47 1/2		220107	13	45		766206	32	12 1/2		
47	418138	4	12 1/2		46823	33	10		464961	37	22 1/2		200338	32	47 1/2		665300	27	70		
48	449292	39	47 1/2		49924	25	12 1/2		499854	22	60		195995	34	1		695850	14	61		
38	649119	24	5		49039	28	5		798239	20	10		167472	12	11		965711	32	21		
5	650845	28	43 1/2		51642	13	41 1/4		702488	10	5		178773	37	76 1/4		881262	6	1 1/4		
09	650554	-	52 1/2		57738	11	73 1/2		708292	12	46 1/2		192902	27	45		901194	40	11 1/4		
75	790272	39	52 1/2		58438	6	19		848711	3	71 1/2		199866	4	72 1/2		1048577	8	64		

Previous

to
the
war
with
Hyder

During
the war

Introduction
of the
Pattakum
System

Ameer
Sing's
Reign

Company
manage-
ment

CHAPTER - VI

THE CARNATIC DEBTS AND THE FINANCIAL CRISIS

With the defeat of the French in 1763 in the third and final Carnatic War, the British established their hegemony over large areas of the south.

Mohammad Ali, the Nawab of the Carnatic, who owed his position to the British was virtually a pawn in the hands of the East India Company and its servants. While the revenue administration of the Carnatic remained nominally in the hands of the Nawab, it was in fact the Company's officials who enjoyed all real powers.

As part of the 'Subsidiary' alliance, a certain sum of money was set aside from the Nawab's revenues for the payment of the Company's troops stationed at Madras for his 'protection'. As the pecuniary demands of the Company grew, the Nawab began to borrow from the private servants of the Company, in order to meet the Company's demands, becoming in the process, inextricably entangled in a debt which soon assumed staggering proportions. As security for these debts, the Nawab mortgaged portions of his territories and allowed the assignees to collect the revenue from them till the principal and interest were redeemed. Here it was not even supposed by the creditors

that the money advanced would ever be repaid directly by the Nawab, but if securities worth many times the principal were pledged, the creditors would be able to make an enormous profit nevertheless. The Nawab issued bonds which formed a medium of speculation and which, according to one contemporary authority, "were freely bought and sold throughout south India, in direct proportion to the Nawab's prospective ability to reclaim them."¹ After the war with Hyder Ali in 1767-69 and in the acute depression which followed, many merchants found themselves loaded with bonds which they could not sell, except at a heavy discount. Moreover, many of the bonds were not even genuine. When the East India Company took over the Carnatic in 1801, it found that 90% of the bonds in circulation were spurious.² The Arcot Debts, as they came to be called left their marked effect on the state of the internal revenues of the country. The result was a massive depreciation and drain in wealth accompanied by the sudden enrichment of the class of creditors who were most often, private servants of the Company.³

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1. An observation made by Hodgson, a high ranking official of the East India Company. See Hilton Brown, Parry's of Madras, pp. 42-43.
 2. Ibid., p. 43; also see Henry Dodwell, Nabobs of Madras London, 1926, p. 135.
 3. The Nawab himself bitterly complained to the Company of the "few individuals who have enriched themselves at the expence of your influence, and of your country; for your servants have no trade in this country, neither do you pay them high wages, yet in a few years they return to England with many

In this Chapter, the Arcot Debts have been assessed from two angles. First, the process of the accumulation of these Debts has been traced; the amounts involved and the methods the creditors used to keep the Nawab in a state of perpetual bondage.⁴ This would in turn form the background of the second and more important question, viz., the impact of the Debts on the agrarian economy of the 18th century Carnatic.

I

The practice of the Nawab borrowing from the Company's servants in order to meet the Company demands began around 1760. The practice was initiated on a small scale, the money being raised for the Nawab only when ready money was available at Madras and stocks were easily replaced from Bengal, but the

lacks of pagodas." The Works of Edmund Burke, Vol.I p.322. See the Chapter on the 'Company's Servant' in H. Dodwell, The Nabobs of Madras, pp. 25-35. Many Governors of the Madras Council, including such celebrated names as Pigot, Wynch and Thomas Rumbold, all made money at the Nawab's expense. On the financial dealings of Robert Orme, the famous historian of British India, with the Nawab, see Henry H. Love, Vestiges of Old Madras, Vol.II pp.514-519. See also Major Mackenzie's Journal of Travels in the East Indies, 1764, National Library of Scotland, MS 1337, pp 78-80.

4. While the sources used in this section do not permit one it would be highly instructive if a study would be made of the phenomenon which began in the 18th century called the drain of wealth. This would entail calculating not only the quantity of wealth (in all its forms) that was extracted from the country, but also detailing the ways in which it was remitted to England.

needs of the Nawab soon grew and he was willing to promise almost any rate of interest on the money he borrowed.⁵

The sums involved were so large and the transactions themselves so dubious that when the Court of Directors were informed of these loans that ran into several million pounds, they ordered an enquiry into the whole affair. In fact, one of the explicit instructions of the Pitt's India Act of 1784 was an enquiry into the nature and origin of these debts.⁶

What was the total amount of money extracted from the Carnatic during this period? According to Burke's estimate, between 1760 and 1780, the direct drain of wealth from the Carnatic amounted to nearly 20 million pounds.⁷ The debts were computed at £ 4,440,000 which according to Burke's calculations was "a good deal more than double the whole annual dividend of the East India Company, the nominal masters of the proprietary in these funds."⁸

5. See Dodwell, Nabobs of Madras, p. 135.

6. See Appendix No.1 to Burke's speech to Parliament in The Works of Edmund Burke, Vol.I, p.347.

7. Of this amount £ 6,000,000 was drawn off by English gentlemen by way of China alone and another £ 400,000 remitted through other channels and in other ways - in jewels, gold and silver directly brought to Europe by foreign companies. The Works of Edmund Burke, Vol.I, p. 320.

8. Ibid., p. 321.

The Debts fell under three categories:-

- i) The loan that was consolidated in 1767
- ii) The 'Cavalry loan' and
- iii) The loan consolidated in 1777.

The consolidated loan of 1767 (Burke, with some sarcasm termed it "The fairest of the whole... I can convict it of nothing worse than the most enormous usury") amounted to £ 880,000 and was claimed the greatest part by company servants residing in Madras.⁹ According to a list of 110 creditors and the money due them by the Nawab, his total debt stood in December 1766 at Star Pagodas 2,229,650.¹⁰ This capital was settled finally by order at ten per cent interest which afforded an interest alone of £ 88,000 annually.¹¹ The Court of Directors were horrified to hear of the existence of this loan two years

9. The Government of Fort St. George tried, at one point, to bring back into effect a standing order of 1714 which, among other impositions, forbade company servants to "hold any manner of correspondence, to make loans or to have any money transactions... with any of the princes, rulers or Governors...", an order that was violated with impunity by the creditors. Proceedings of the Committee of the Nawabs Creditors (hereafter PCNC), Vol.I, p.35.
10. PCNC, Vol.I, pp. 9-11. Also see The Works of Edmund Burke, op. cit., Vol.I, pp. 320-21.
11. Order of the President and Council, of 17th May 1766. PCNC, Vol.I, p.1.

later in 1769, when the trustees of the Nawab's private creditors John Pybus, John Call and James Bouchier proved a deed of assignment upon the Nawab and his son of fifteen districts¹² of the Nawab's country, yielding a revenue of eight hundred thousand pagodas (£ 320,000) annually; and another assignment of the yearly tribute paid the Nawab from the Rajah of Tanjore amounting to four hundred thousand rupees (£ 40,000).¹³ The Court of Directors did order an enquiry into the transaction which the new Council of Proprietors annulled as the creditors had by now gained considerable influence among the latter group. Their claims were thus admitted.¹⁴

Even the rate of interest at which the debt was actually contracted was not clearly set: was it 10 per cent (as was maintained by those who defended the loan in Parliament) or was it much more? At first loans were contracted at 36 percent the rate being then reduced to 25 and then to 20 per cent.¹⁵

12. The fifteen districts assigned were Voligonda, Chellumbrum, Bonaguerry, Verdachallam, Elavanscare, Teagar, Calicourchy, Trivady, Villaporam, Gingee, Waldour, Trenomalle, Chittaput, Timery, Wandawash. Extract from a letter of the Nawab to his creditors, 1st July, 1767, PCMC, Vol.I, p.13.

13. Works of Edmund Burke, op. cit., Vol.I, pp. 322-23.

14. Ibid., p. 323. Also see RC Dutt, Economic History of India, Vol.I, p. 71.

15. See Nawabs proposals to private European Creditors, 26th Dec. 1766. PCMC, Vol.I, pp. 3-4.

If any interest fell into an arrear, as it so often did, the arrear formed new principal which was then added to the old, and 20 per cent interest accrued on both. When interest rates were ordered to be reduced to 10 per cent by the Company, what actually happened was that a 20 per cent interest was added to the old principal for the year previous to the order (1766) forming thus a new fund, and it was on that accumulated fund that 10 per cent interest was settled, not on the sum originally lent.¹⁶ For this debt of £ 880,000 it was unlikely that the Nawab had obtained even £ 100,000 in ready money and all his appeals for leniency fell on deaf ears.¹⁷ During the war with Hyder Ali, the creditors—who by now were the revenue collectors for large areas of the Carnatic—lent money to the Company for war expenses; they charged them interest at only 8 per cent per annum but were firm with the Court of Directors that the interest at which they lent money to the Nawab, remain at the old rates.¹⁸

The Cavalry Loan, taken by the Nawab in 1777 speaks tellingly of the blatantly fraudulent methods the creditors used in their lending deals with the Nawab. In order to discharge the arrears of pay to his mutinous cavalry detachment before he disbanded it, the Nawab contracted a debt for the

16. Works of E. Burke, Vol.I, p.324.

17. Letter from the Nawab to his creditors, dated 11th Dec. 1769, PCHC, Vol.I, p.26.

18. PCHC, Vol.I, pp. 23-24.

sum of £ 160,000 from three servants of the Company—Taylor, Majendie and Call. When the time for actual payment by the creditors came, the Nawab was told that as there was no ready money available, the creditors would make the payment in four months time; the Nawab managed some how to pacify his soldiers with this promise. However, two whole years later, in 1779, the amount had still not been handed over to the Nawab although the interest on the 'loan' went on mounting! (It was fixed legally at 12 per cent but according to Burke, was in reality computed at 20 or 24 per cent). Now on the promise of payment the Nawab delivered up the revenues of a district. Since the creditors did not have to begin payments till after four months and did not actually do so till after two years, it is clear that not only was their payment to the Nawab made from the revenue they received by assignment from the Nawab himself, but the revenues drawn must have been considerably greater than the amount originally 'lent'. The Nawab received complaints from the amilidar of the assigned districts that the creditors had collected all the revenue and consequently another section of troops—those whose salaries were to be disbursed from the revenues of that particular province—were *mutinying* as they had not received their pay for seven or eight months.¹⁹ Instead of cancelling the debt accumulated as a result of this outright theft, or at least ordering an enquiry

19. Works of E. Burke, Vol.I, p.326.

into it (as the Fox's India Bill laid down) the ministerial Board added the arrears of 12 per cent interest accumulated between 1777-84 to make a new capital of £ 294,000 (from the old £ 160,000) upon which they charged a new interest of 12 per cent: all on a transaction in which not a single rupee had in reality been advanced.²⁰ To sum up in the graphic rhetoric of Burke "Bond is paid by bond; arrear is turned into new arrear; usury engenders new usury; mutiny, suspended in one place starts up in another; until all revenues an all establishments are entangled into one inextricable knot of confusion from which they are only disengaged by being entirely destroyed."²¹

These massive loans were moreover made in a period of acute depression and shortage. First the province was desolated by the war with Hyder Ali in 1767-69. The resulting depression was heightened by the Nawab's inability to honour his promises, and a stepping-up of revenue assignments. The smaller merchant creditors had large amounts locked up in bonds (as part of the liquid capital of the place was destroyed) for which they could neither raise money nor sell, except at a

20. Ibid., p.327, also see Love, Vestiges of Old Madras, Vol.III, pp. 136-39 for the details of the devious methods used by the creditors in collusion with high company officials.

21. Works of Edmund Burke, Vol.I, p.326.

heavy discount. On top of all this broke out the Second Mysore War in 1780 which lasted for four years. Young, a merchant in Madras wrote in 1781, "It is astonishing how dear every article for the table is. Money is so scarce that it is impossible to borrow or get in grain, and, if it was sold at even so low a price, ready money could not be got..."²²

Against this background now came the consolidated debt of 1777, the largest and most elusive of the Arcot debts, as neither could the actual amounts involved be computed (the versions differed from each other by as much as £1 million pounds), nor was there a list of the creditors that could be obtained. In any case this was contracted against the express orders of the Court of Directors. The amount was later roughly calculated at £ 2,400,000 principal, at 12 per cent interest.²³

So outrageous were the terms of the debt that in 1781 the creditors themselves (or their agents) agreed that 25 per cent could be struck off from the principal of the debt, without the interest. But here again they were treated with a leniency which showed the extent to which their influence in the Court of Directors had grown. The Court of Directors responded to this proposal with a magnanimity that surprised the creditors themselves. Four years interest (i.e., from 1777-81) at

22. See H. Dodwall, The Nabobs of Madras, pp. 135-137.

23. The Works of Edmund Burke, Vol.I, p.343.

12 per cent was added to the original principal, and then over and above that, an annuity of 6 per cent was fixed on the sum until the debt was repaid.²⁴

The Ministerial Board treated the Carnatic creditors with similar generosity as regards the repayment of the debts. When it became quite obvious that the Nawab simply could not repay the loans he had contracted, a sum of £ 480,000 was set aside from the public revenues of the Carnatic as a fund for the repayment of the debt though it had been contracted illegally. This was based on a gross over-estimation of the total revenues of the Carnatic.²⁵ The sum amounted to more than half the total revenues of the Carnatic; this at a time when it had still not got over the ravages of the Second Mysore War. The cycle of debt did not stop here however. In order to repay the sum of £ 480,000 the Nawab had nobody to turn to but his English *soucaris*. The most notorious of the Madras sharks, Paul Benfield, lent the Nawab the requisite sum at the rate of 24 per cent, and for which the Nawab had once again to mortgage his territories.

24. Ibid., Vol.I, p. 328.

25. Ibid., Vol.I, p. 334.

26. Paul Benfield, called the Banker of the Carnatic, rose from very humble beginnings; his career is an interesting example of how the 'Nabobs' were made. In 1732 Benfield's share of the debts amounted to £ 400,000 which with interest became £ 592,000. In 1773, he laid claims on assignments upon the revenues of Tanjore amounting to £ 234,000 totally. Although Benfield was on the top of

After the East India Company annexed the Carnatic in 1801, they kept aside a sum of £ 120,000 annually to redeem the amount. They found a) the debt to be monstrous, around £ 30,000,000 and b) that the majority of these debts (around 90%) were based on bonds that were forged and fictitious. Commissioners were set up--two in Madras and two in London to weed out the fake bonds.²⁷

II

With the passing of large tracts of territory into the hands of private money-lenders, new forms of land revenue collection were introduced which were both harsher and less elastic than those in use before. The Nawabs demands, though no less severe were at least suited to the yearly produce of the soil. No such consideration was shown by the new revenue collectors. There is much justification in the

the list of creditors in 1783, when the terms of the 1777 loan came under rigorous enquiry, he tried to wriggle out of his predicament by starting a suit against his agents in the Mayor's Court for the bond they gave him. Later, although Benfield was forced to give up his bond he was re-installed in his original demand. See Love, Vestiges of Old Madras, Vol.III, pp. 35-36; also The Works of Edmund Burke, p 341-343; also R.C. Dutt, The Economic History of India, Vol.I, pp. 72-73, 77-78.

27. The two people involved in the forged bonds racket were the Nawab's sheristadar Raya Reddi Rao and Avadhanum Paupiah, or the notorious 'Paupiah Brahminney', see A. Brown, Parry's of Madras, p. 43.

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observation of R.C. Dutt when he wrote that, "The whole of the Karnatic resembled an egg-shell with its contents taken out. The fields and villages of Southern India were converted into a vast farm, and the tillers tilled and the labourers toiled in order that all the produce might be annually exported to Europe."²⁸

In a Minute submitted to the Madras Council in 1795, Lord Hobart, the then Governor of Madras, made an unusually candid expose' of the impact of the mortgaging system on the lives and resources of those at the bottom rung of the ladder--the common cultivators.²⁹ The following paragraphs are based on this Minute.

The practice of mortgaging territory was carried out mainly in the southern districts--in Tirunelveli in particular, as being most distant from Madras--although similar practices were also in use in Vellore, Arcot, Trichinopoly and later, in Tanjore.

The whole transaction would commence at Madras where the Nawab paid his instalments or kists. A deal would be struck between him and one of the principal houses of business or a private individual. The Creditors, not satisfied with a

28. R.C.Dutt, Economic History of India, op. cit., Vol.I, p.67.

29. Lord Hobarts' Minute in Council at Fort St. George.
(hereafter Hobarts' Minute...) 24th October 1795.

simple security (i.e. the mere handing over of a district) would in addition insist that a man of their choice be appointed to the posts of Manager or Aumildar of the district and Military Commander (Tehsildar),³⁰ in order that their claims be rigorously enforced. The link between the three parties was established before the agreement for a loan was made, and the mortgaged territory then passed under the sole governing power of the creditors and their agents. All efforts were then made to realise as much revenue in as little a time as possible.

The interest on the loan varied but was fixed at an average of 4 per cent a month, besides the Hawab undertaking to meet the pay requirements of all the subordinate servants employed by the creditors. This latter amount was considerably above the actual expense incurred by the Tehsildar, the difference being regarded as part of the legitimate advantages of the revenue appropriators.

The Manager arrived in the district, assembled his under managers and renters; and then commenced the second part of this oppressive transaction. In order to satisfy quickly the urgent and persistent demands of the Tehsildar the Manager had to turn to subordinate Soukars both native and foreign who would make him advances of money. The securities they

30. In the Southern districts the Tehsildar was also in charge of police duties. See Wilson, A Glossary of Revenue Terms, p.506

received were either the bonds of the inhabitants, or grain. Soon three-fourths of the sum lent were secured to the soukar by grain made over to him; for the remaining one-fourth the bonds of the inhabitants were secured by him for that part of the revenue which the cultivators usually paid to the government in cash (i.e., usually for dry grains). Thus the cultivators were forced to anticipate the crops and pay interest upon money before it was due from them. The soukar then sent his own servants into the countryside with an order from the Nawabs Manager to seize grain and secure his bonds. If the ryot delayed his payment he was confined without food and beaten. Thus an inhabitant who granted a bond for 100 chukrams (40 pagodas, was compelled finally to part with 110-115 chukrams; if his credit was exhausted, he had to part with his stock of cattle and food grain. As a last resort, the inhabitants fled to nearby territories.³¹

The grain now completely in his control, the soukar sought to reap as big a profit as he could on its sale. The poor ryot had to dispose of the grain as soon as it came into

31. Between 1785 and 1790 Mr. Lushington, the Collector of Tinnevely observed that "the inhabitants fled in numbers to Travancore and the ruin of the country was fast approaching." See, Bishop R. Caldwell, History of Tinnevely, p. 157.

his hands. The Soukar who now had a monopoly on the grain would hoard it thus pushing up its price. If any of the stock remained in his hands at the end of the season the whole quantity would be divided up among the inhabitants and forced on them as gaddayum³² (a custom of ancient standing which compelled the producer to buy grain at a valuation considerably above the market price). The Soukar's authority was so complete that no one could part with money or grain but by his orders.

In this way, the district of Tirunelveli was annually mortgaged to the amount of 300,000 pagodas. The interest at 4 per cent per month came to 72,000 pagodas. The charges paid for the servants and peons of the creditors amounted to another 3,000 pagodas, making the total amount of revenue collected as 75,000 pagodas (£ 50,000).

Apart from all this, besides the dealings of the principal Soukars with the head manager, there were also similar practices at play at lower levels and for lesser amounts amounting in all from 50,000 to one lakh of pagodas, again, on which interest accrued before the kists were due.

Collections made in this manner, as Hobart noted, tended to take the peasant to complete ruin. With the decrease in cultivation the price of grain shot up, "...and it is a

32. Ibid., p. 157.

notorious maxim of eastern finances, that a year of scarcity is more productive than a year of plenty... because, as a given number of months can only consume a proportionable quantity of grain, the immediate advantage or disadvantage... arises from the price at which that given quantity is sold. In years of plenty the superfluous grain is in a great measure useless owing to the partial and difficult means of exportation: in years of scarcity... as the demand is greater than the supply, an increase of the price is produced by the usual effects of a competition in the market."³³

Thus the relentless pressure on the Carnatic was continued inspite of the widespread famine that affected Madras in 1793. While the Company revenues showed a surplus, 'investments', i.e., commodities purchased out of the revenues for sale in Europe, converted the surplus into a deficit. During this time it was estimated that the amount of cargoes to Europe valued at prime cost exceeded two million sterling.³⁴ With the introduction of land settlements in the Carnatic in the 19th century, the extraction of revenues was put on a more systemetised footing, although no less severe.

33. Roberts Minute, p.101.

34. Dutt, The Economic History of India, Vol.I, p.77.

C O N C L U S I O N

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The survey we have offered of the agrarian economy of the Carnatic between the years 1750 and 1800 is in many ways an incomplete one. For instance, we have barely touched on the nature of the rural and urban markets, the influence of trade, and the movement of prices (crucial to an understanding of the real incidence of the land revenue). These are important aspects in their own right; but what the present survey aims at is essentially to delineate the main features of land-rights, the social organisation of the village, and the assessment and collection of revenue. From an analysis of these, even with the gaps mentioned above, certain broad conclusions appear fairly distinctly.

The over-riding impression that emerges from a study of the sources of these fifty years is that it was a period of dislocation; of continuous intensification of pressures on a pre-modern rural regime. The heavier assessments and the urge to collect in cash brought about change within the village 'community' by accentuating differentiation. Of the hiking of assessments, clear

evidence comes from areas which came under the Company's administration. Finally, a point was reached where the stranglehold of the colonial apparatus became so complete over the entire Carnatic territory, that the revenue was virtually credited into the account of private Company officials. The mechanism for achieving this was largely the notorious Carnatic Debts, to which we have devoted a chapter.

Around the end of the 18th century the Company was faced in the Carnatic with a situation similar to what it faced in Bengal prior to the Permanent Settlement.

Hitherto, revenues had been collected from the Carnatic with a rapacity that paid little heed to future consequences; the resources of the region had been exhausted causing a near complete breakdown of the fiscal system. The ryotwari settlement that was introduced in the early 19th century was the logical response of the colonial administration to this fiscal crisis. The collection of revenues, in order to be maintained and enhanced, had to be placed on a sounder footing. The groundwork for this system had been laid essentially by the very disruption of the former agrarian order.

Read and Munro's initial experimentations with the ryotwari system in Barasahat were based upon a certain

understanding of the structure of agrarian rights in that region. They believed that they were conferring the rights of private proprietorship on a class which had hitherto not possessed this right. Munro's assumption was only partially correct. Although peasant proprietorship in 18th century Carnatic did not exhibit all the features of private property, there did exist, uniformly over the Carnatic, certain strata of superior right holders, who possessed full proprietary rights over the land. From our study what clearly emerges is the considerable degree to which differentiation had progressed even prior to colonial intervention. This was intensified very greatly with the new fiscal pressures. Such differentiation not only greatly weakened the village community as a fiscal unit but it clearly made it possible for revenue to be assessed on each individual separately according to the land he owned in his name. The Mauzawari (which pre-supposed the basis of rural society as lying in a 'republican' village system) could thus be dispensed with, and the Ryotwari introduced.

In its results the Ryotwari settlement continued the process already initiated in the Carnatic during the last fifty years of the 18th century. The Ryotwari system maintained the high level of assessments (it remained at

around 50 per cent inspite of Munro's plea for their reduction to 33 per cent). Rising rates were imposed on waste land brought under cultivation.¹ Differentiation continued to increase: the Ryotwari system, thus, was no agrarian revolution in favour of the peasantry. Its main object was the extraction of economic rent for the Company. It, therefore, achieved that the Carnatic Debts had initiated - by other means.

1. For a useful discussion on the economic consequences of the Ryotwari system see H. Mukherji, The Ryotwari System in Madras, 1792-1827, Calcutta, 1962; also see Sarada Raju, Economic Conditions in the Madras Presidency, 1800-1850, Madras, 1941.

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